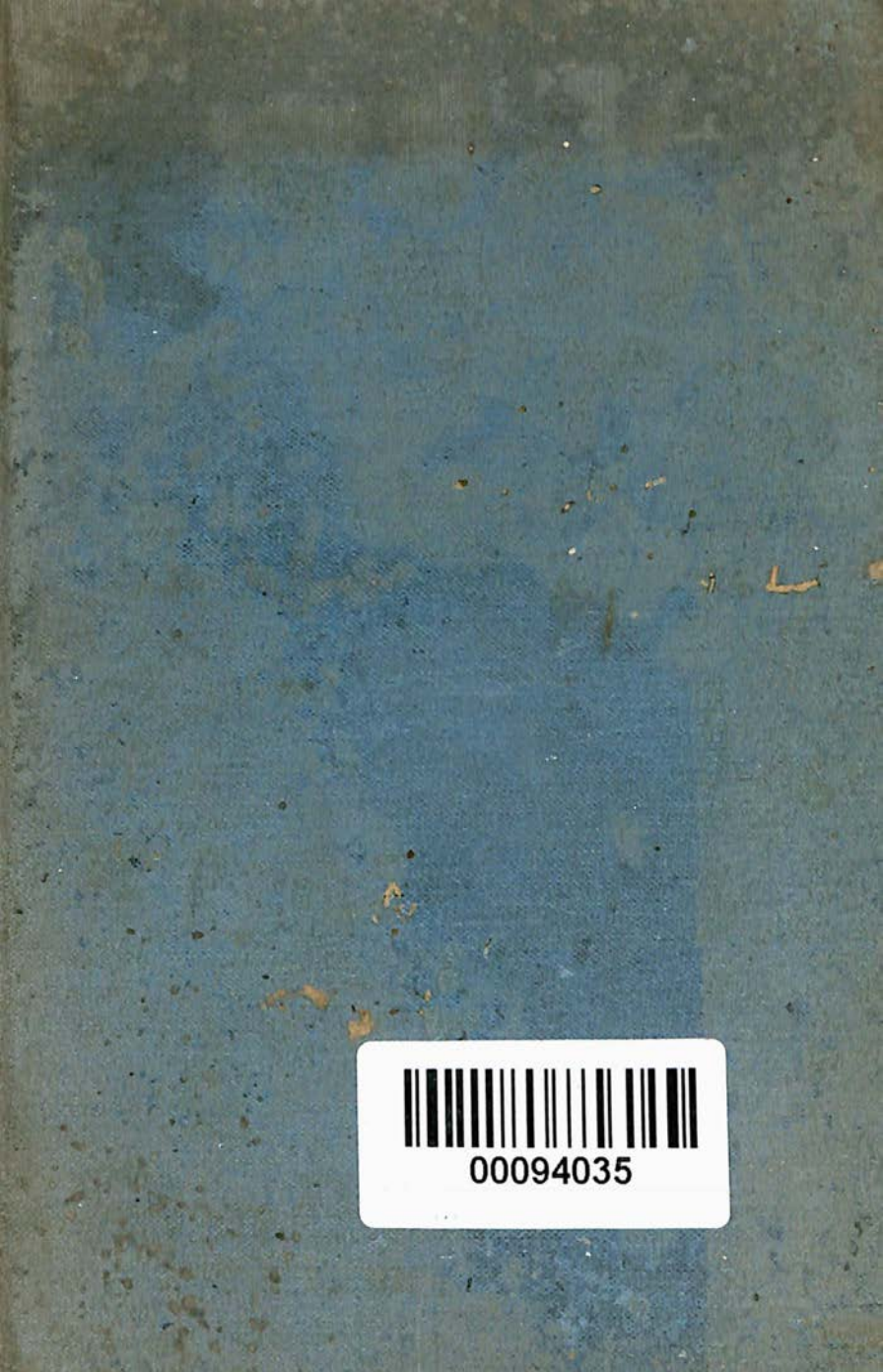

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THE

WORKS OF CHARLES KINGSLEY.

VOLUME XXII.

SERMONS ON NATIONAL SUBJECTS.



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94035

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I.

THE KING OF THE EARTH.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

[*Preached in* 1849.]

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.—MATTHEW xxi. 4.

THIS Sunday is the first of the four Sundays in Advent. During those four Sundays, our forefathers have advised us to think seriously of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—not that we should neglect to think of it at all times. As some of you know, I have preached to you about it often lately. Perhaps before the end of Advent you will all of you, more or less, understand what all that I have said about the cholera, and public distress, and the sins of this nation, and the sins of the labouring people has to do with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But I intend, especially in my next four sermons, to speak my whole mind to you about this matter as far as God has shown it to me; taking the Collect, Epistle, and Gospels, for each Sunday in Advent, and explaining them. I am sure I cannot do better; for the more I see of those Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, and the way in which

they are arranged, the more I am astonished and delighted at the wisdom with which they are chosen, the wise order in which they follow each other, and fit into each other. It is very fit, too, that we should think of our Lord's coming at this season of the year above all others; because it is the hardest season—the season of most want, and misery, and discontent, when wages are low, and work is scarce, and fuel is dear, and frosts are bitter, and farmers and tradesmen, and gentlemen, too, are at their wits' end to square their accounts, and pay their way. Then is the time that the evils of society come home to us—that our sins, and our sorrows, which, after all, are the punishment of our sins, stare us in the face. Then is the time, if ever, for men's hearts to cry out for a Saviour, who will deliver them out of their miseries and their sins; for a Heavenly King who will rule them in righteousness, and do justice and judgment on the earth, and see that those who are in need and necessity have right; for a Heavenly Counsellor who will guide them into all truth—who will teach them what they are, and whither they are going, and what the Lord requires of them. I say the hard days of winter are a fit time to turn men's hearts to Christ their King—the fittest of all times for a clergyman to get up in his pulpit, as I do now, and tell his people, as I tell you, that Jesus Christ your King has not forgotten you—that He is coming speedily to judge the world, and execute justice and judgment for the meek of the earth.

Now do not be in a hurry, and fancy from what I have just said, that I am one of those who think the end of the world is at hand. It may be, for aught I know. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not even the angels of God, nor the Son, but the Father only." If you wish for my own opinion, I

believe that what people commonly call the end of the world, that is, the end of the earth and of mankind on it, is not at hand at all. As far as I can judge from Scripture, and from the history of all nations, the earth is yet young, and mankind in its infancy. Five thousand years hence, our descendants may be looking back on us as foolish barbarians, in comparison with what they know: just as we look back upon the ignorance of people a thousand years ago. And yet I believe that the end of this world, in the real Scripture sense of the word "world," is coming very quickly and very truly—The end of this system of society, of these present ways in religion, and money-making, and conducting ourselves in all the affairs of life, which we English people have got into nowadays. The end of it is coming. It cannot last much longer; for it is destroying itself. It will not last much longer; for Christ and not the devil is the King of the earth. As St. Paul said to his people, so say I to you, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

These may seem strange words, but almost every one is saying them, in his own way. One large party among religious people in these days is complaining that Christ has left His Church, and that the cause of Christianity will be ruined and lost, unless some great change takes place. Another large party of religious people say, that the prophecies are on the point of being all fulfilled; that the 1260 days, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, are just coming to an end; and that Christ is coming with His saints, to reign openly upon earth for a thousand years. The wisest philosophers and historians of late years have been all foretelling a great and tremendous change in England, and throughout all Europe; and in the meantime, manufacturers and landlords, tradesmen and farmers, artisans

and labourers, all say, that there *must* be a change and will be a change. I believe they are all right, every one of them. They put it in their words; I think it better to put it in the Scripture words, and say boldly, "Jesus Christ, the King of the earth, is coming."

But you will ask, "What right have you to stand up and say anything so surprising?" My friends, the world is full of surprising things, and this age above all ages. It was not sixty years ago, that a nobleman was laughed at in the House of Lords for saying that he believed that we should one day see ships go by steam; and now there are steamers on every sea and ocean in the world. Who expected twenty years ago to see the whole face of England covered with these wonderful railroads? Who expected on the 22nd of February last year, that, within a single month, half the nations of Europe, which looked so quiet and secure, would be shaken from top to bottom with revolution and bloodshed—kings and princes vanishing one after the other like a dream—poor men sitting for a day as rulers of kingdoms, and then hurled down again to make room for other rulers as unexpected as themselves? Can anyone consider the last fifty years? —can anyone consider that one last year, 1848, and then not feel that we do live in a most strange and awful time? a time for which nothing is too surprising —a time in which we all ought to be prepared, from the least to the greatest, to see the greatest horrors and the greatest blessings come suddenly upon us, like a thief in the night? So much for Christ's coming being too wonderful a thing to happen just now. Still you are right to ask: "What do you mean by Christ's being our King? what do you mean by His coming to us? What reason have you for supposing that He is coming *now*, rather than at any other time?

And if He be coming, what are we to do? What is there we ought to repent of? what is there we ought to amend?"

Well, my friends—is is just these very questions which I hope and trust God will help me to answer to you, in my next few sermons—I am perfectly convinced that we must get them answered and act upon them speedily. I am perfectly convinced that if we go on as most of us are going in England now, the Lord of us all will come in an hour when we are not aware, and cut us asunder in the deepest and most real sense, as He came and cut asunder France, Germany, and Austria only last year, and appoint us our portion with the unbelievers. And I believe that our punishment will be seven times as severe as that of either France, Germany, or Austria, because we have had seven times their privileges and blessings, seven times their Gospel light and Christian knowledge, seven times their freedom and justice in laws and constitution; seven times their wealth, and prosperity, and means of employing our population. Much has been given to England, and of her much will be required. And if you could only see the state of mankind over the greatest part of the globe, how infinitely fewer opportunities they have of knowing God's will than you have, you would feel that to you, poor and struggling as some of you are—to you much has been given, and of you much will be required.

Now first, what do I mean by Christ being our king? I daresay there are some among you who are inclined to think that, when we talk of Christ being a king, that the word king means something very different from its common meaning—and, God knows, that that is true enough. Our blessed Lord took care to make people understand that—how He was not like

one of the kings of the nations, how His kingdom was not of this world. But yet the Bible tells us again and again that all good kings, all real kings, are patterns of Christ; and, therefore, that when we talk of Christ being a king, we mean that He is a king in everything that a king ought to be; that He fulfils perfectly all the duties of a king; that He is the pattern which all kings ought to copy. Kings have been in all ages too apt to forget that, and, indeed, so have the people too. We English have forgotten most thoroughly in these days, that Christ is our king, or even a king at all. We talk of Christ being a "spiritual" king, and then we say that that merely means that He is king of Christians' hearts. And when anyone asks what that means, it comes out, that all we mean is, that Christ has a very great influence over the hearts of believing Christians—when He can obtain it; or else that it means that He is king of a very small number of people called the elect, whom He has chosen out, but that He has absolutely nothing to do with the whole rest of the world. And then, when anyone stands up with the Bible in his hand, and says, in the plain words of Scripture: "Christ is not only the king of believers, He is the king of the whole earth; the king of the clouds and the thunder, the king of the land and the cattle, and the trees, and the corn, and to whomsoever He will He giveth them. Christ is not only the king of believers—He is the king of all—the king of the wicked, of the heathen, of those who do not believe Him, who never heard of Him. Christ is not only the king of a few individual persons, one here and one there in every parish, but He is the king of every nation. He is the king of England, by the grace of God, just as much as Queen Victoria is, and ten thousand times more." If any man talks in this

way, people stare—think him an enthusiast—ask him what new doctrine this is, and call his words unscriptural, just because they come out of Scripture and not out of men's perversions and twistings of Scripture. Nevertheless Christ is King; really and truly King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and He will make men know it. What He was, that He is and ever will be; there is no change in Him; His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all ages, and woe unto those, small or great, who rebel against Him!

But what sort of a king is He? He is a king of law, and order, and justice. He is not selfish, fanciful, self-willed. He said himself that He came not to do His own will, but His Father's. He is a king of gentleness and meekness too: but do not mistake that. There is no weak indulgence in Him. A man may be very meek, and yet stern enough and strong enough. Moses was the meekest of men, we read, and yet He made those who rebelled against him feel that he was not to be trifled with. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram found that to their cost. He would not even spare his own brother Aaron, his own sister Miriam, when they rebelled. And he was right. He showed his love by it; indulgence is not love. It is no sign of meekness, but only of cowardice and carelessness, to be afraid to rebuke sin. Moses knew that he was doing God's work, that he was appointed to make a great nation of those slavish besotted Jews, his countrymen; that he was sent by God with boundless blessings to them; and woe to whoever hindered him from that. Because he loved the Jews, therefore he dared punish those who tempted them to forget the promised land of Canaan, or break God's covenant, in which lay all their hope.

And such a one is our King, my friends; Jesus Christ the Son of God. Like Moses, says St. Paul, He is faithful in all His office. Therefore He is severe as well as gentle. He was so when on earth. With the poor, the outcast, the neglected, those on whom men trampled, who was gentler than the Lord Jesus? To the proud Pharisee, the canting Scribe, the cunning Herodian, who was sterner than the Lord Jesus? Read that awful 23rd chapter of St. Matthew, and then see how the Saviour, the lamb dumb before His shearers, He of whom it was said "He shall not strive nor cry, nor shall His voice be heard in the streets"—how He could speak when He had occasion. . . . "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

My friends, those were the words of our King; of Him in whom was neither passion nor selfishness; who loved us even to the death, and endured for us the scourge, the cross, the grave. And believe me, such are His words now; though we do not hear Him, the heaven and the earth hear Him and obey Him. His message is pardon, mercy, deliverance to the sorrowful, and the oppressed, and the neglected; and to the proud, the tyrannical, the self-righteous, the hypocritical, tribulation and anguish, shame and woe.

Because He is the Saviour, therefore He is a consuming fire to all those who try to hinder Him from saving men. Because He is the Son of God, He will sweep out of His Father's kingdom all who offend, and whosoever maketh and loveth a lie. Because He is boundless mercy and love, therefore He will show no mercy to those who try to stop His purposes of love. Because He is the King of men, the enemies of mankind are His enemies; and He will reign till He has put them all under His feet.

II.

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our example, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.—ROMANS xv. 4.

"WHATSOEVER was written aforetime." There is no doubt, I think, that by these words St. Paul means the Bible; that is, the Old Testament, which was the only part of the Bible already written in his time. For it is of the Psalms which he is speaking. He mentions a verse out of the 69th Psalm, "The reproaches of Him that reproached thee fell on me;" which, he says, applies to Christ just as much as it did to David, who wrote it. Christ, he says, pleased not Himself any more than David, but suffered willingly and joyfully for God's sake, because He knew that He was doing God's work. And we, he goes on to say, must do the same; do as Christ did; we must not please ourselves, but every one of us please our brother for his good and edification; that is, in order to build him up, strengthen him, make him wiser, better, more comfortable. For, he says, Christ pleased not Himself, but like David, lived only to help others; and therefore this verse out of David's Psalms, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me," is a lesson to us; a pattern of what we ought to feel, and do, and suffer. "For whatsoever was written aforetime," all

these ancient psalms and prophets, and histories of men and nations who trusted in God, "were written for our example, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."

Yes, my friends, this is true; and the longer you live a life of faith and godliness, the longer you read and study that precious Book of books which God has put so freely into your hands in these days, the more true you will find it. And if it was true of the Old Testament, written before the Lord came down and dwelt among men, how much more must it be true of the New Testament, which was written after His coming by apostles and evangelists, who had far fuller light and knowledge of the Lord than ever David or the old prophets, even in their happiest moments, had. Ah, what a treasure you have, every one of you, in those Bibles of yours, which too many of you read so little! From the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelations, it is all written for our example, all profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for all good works. Ah! friends, friends, is not this the reason why so many of you do not read your Bibles, that you do not wish to be furnished for good works?—do not wish to be men of God, godly and godlike men, but only to be men of the world, caring only for money and pleasure?—some of you, alas! not wishing to be men and women at all, but only a sort of brute beasts with clothes on, given up to filth and folly, like the animals that perish, or rather worse than the animals, for they could be no better if they tried, but you might be. Oh! what might you not be, what are you not already, if you but knew it! Members of Christ, children of God, heirs of the kingdom of heaven, heirs of a hope undying, pure, that

will never fade away, having a right given you by the promise and oath of Almighty God himself, to hope for yourselves, for your neighbours, for this poor distracted world, for ever and ever; a right to believe that there is an everlasting day of justice, and peace, and happiness in store for the whole world, and that you, if you will, may have your share in that glorious sunrise which shall never set again. You may have your share in it, each and every one of you; and if you ask why, go to the Scriptures, and there read the promises of God, the grounds of your just hope, for all heaven and earth.

First, of hope for yourselves.—I say first for yourselves, not because a man is right in being selfish, and caring only for his own soul, but because a man must care for his own soul first, if he ever intends to care for others; a man must have hope for himself first, if he is to have hope for others. He may stop there, and turn his religion into a selfish superstition, and spend his life in asking all day long, "Shall I be saved, shall I be damned?" or worse still, in chuckling over his own good fortune, and saying to himself, "I shall be saved, whoever else is damned;" but whether he ends there or not, he must begin there; begin by trying to get himself saved. For if he does not know what is right and good for himself, how can he tell what is right and good for others? If he wishes to bring his neighbours out of their sins, he must surely first have been brought out of his own sins, and so know what forgiveness and sanctification means. If he wishes to make others at peace with God, he must first be at peace with God himself, to know what God's peace is. If he wants to teach others their duty, he must first know his own duty, for all men's duty is one and the same. If he wishes to have hope for the

world, he must first have hope for himself, for he is in the world, a part of it, and he must learn what blessings God intends for him, and they will teach him what blessings God has in store for the earth. Faith and hope, like charity, must begin at home. By learning the corruption of our own hearts, we learn the corruption of human nature. By learning what is the only medicine which can cure our own sick hearts, we learn what is the only medicine which can cure human nature. We learn by our own experience, that God is all-forgiving love; that His peace shines bright upon the soul which casts itself utterly on Jesus Christ the Lord for pardon, strength, and safety; that God's Spirit is ready and able to raise us out of all our sin, and sottishness, and weakness, and wilfulness, and selfishness, and renew us into quite new men, different characters from what we used to be; and so, by having hope for ourselves, we learn step by step and year by year to have hope for our friends, for our neighbours, and for the whole world.

For that is another great lesson which the Bible teaches us—hope for the world. Men say to us, "This world has always gone on ill, and will always go on so. Tyrants and knaves and hypocrites have always had the power in it; idlers have always had the enjoyment of it; while the humble, and industrious, and godly, who would not foul their hands with the wicked ways of the world, have been always laughed at, neglected, oppressed, persecuted. The world," they say, "is very bad, and we cannot live in it without giving way a little to its badness, and going the old road."

But he who, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, has hope, can answer "Yes—and yet no."

"Yes—we agree that the world has gone on badly enough: perhaps we think the world worse than it thinks itself; for God's Spirit has taught us to see sin, and shame, and ruin, in many a thing which the world thinks right and reasonable. And yet," says the true Christian man, "although we think the world worse than anyone else thinks it, and are more unhappy than anyone else about all the sin, and injustice, and misery we see in it, we have the very strongest faith—we are perfectly certain—we are as sure as if we saw it coming to pass here before us, that the world will come right at last. For the Bible tells us that the Son of God is the king of the world; that He has been the master and ruler of it from the beginning. He, the Bible tells us, condescended to come down on earth and be born in the likeness of a poor man, and die on the cross for this poor world of His, that He might take away the sins of it." "Behold the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist, "who takes away the sin of the world." How dare we, who call ourselves Christians, we who have been baptized into His name, we who have tasted of His mercy, we who know the might of His love, the converting and renewing power of His Spirit—how dare we doubt but that He *will* take away the sins of the world? Ay; step by step, nation by nation, year by year, the Lord shall conquer; love, and justice, and wisdom shall spread and grow; for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. He has promised to take away the sins of the world, and He is God, and cannot lie. There is the Christian's hope: let him leave infidels to say "The world always was bad, and it must remain so to the end;" the Christian ought to be able to answer, "The world was bad, and is bad; but for that very reason it will *not* remain so to the

end: for the Lord and king of the earth is boundless love, justice, goodness itself, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and cast out of His kingdom all things that offend, and make in His good time the kingdoms of this world, the kingdoms of God and of His Christ."

"Ah but," someone may say, "that, if it ever happens at all, will not happen till we are dead, and what part or lot shall *we* have in it? we who die in the midst of all this sin, and injustice, and distress?" There again the Bible gives us hope: "I believe," says the Creed, "in the resurrection of the flesh." The Bible teaches us to believe, that we, each of us, as human beings, men and women, shall have a share in that glorious day; not merely as ghosts, and disembodied spirits—of which the Bible, thanks be to God, says little or nothing, but as real live human beings, with new bodies of our own, on a new earth, under a new heaven. "Therefore," says David, "my flesh shall rest in hope;" not merely my soul, my ghost, but my flesh. For the Lord, who not only died, but rose again with His body, shall raise our bodies, according to the mighty working by which He subdues all things to Himself; and then the whole manhood of each of us, body, soul, and spirit, shall have one perfect consummation and bliss, in His eternal and everlasting glory.—That is our hope. If that is not a gospel, and good news from heaven to poor distressed creatures in hovels, and on sick beds, to people racked with life-long pain and disease, to people in crowded cities, who never from week's end to week's end look on the green fields and bright sky —if that is not good news, and a dayspring of boundless hope from on high for them, what news can be?

But how are we to get this hope? The text tells

us; through comfort of the Scriptures; through the strengthening and comforting promises, and examples, and rules of God's gracious dealings which we find therein. Through comfort of the Scriptures, but also through patience. Ah, my friends, of that too we must think; we must, as St. James says, "let patience have her perfect work," or else we shall not be perfect ourselves. If we are hasty, self-conceited, covetous, ready to help ourselves by the first means that come to hand; if we are full of hard judgments about our neighbours, and doubts about God's good purpose toward the world; in short, if we are not *patient*, the Bible will teach us little or nothing. It may make us superstitious, bigoted, fanatical, conceited, pharisaical, but like Jesus Christ the Lord it will not make us, unless we have patience.

And where are we to get patience? God knows it is hard in such a world as this for poor creatures to be patient always. But faith can breed patience, though patience cannot breed itself;—and faith in whom? Faith in our Father in heaven, even in the Almighty God Himself. He calls Himself "the God of Patience and Consolation." Pray for His Holy Spirit, and He will make you patient; pray for His Holy Spirit, and He will console and comfort you. He has promised That Spirit of His, The Spirit of love, trust, and patience—The Comforter—to as many as ask Him. Ask Him now, this day—come to His holy table this day, and ask Him to make you patient; ask Him to take all the hastiness, and pride, and ill-temper, and self-will, and greediness out of you, and to change your wills into the likeness of His will. Then your eyes will be opened to understand His law. Then you will see in the Scriptures a sure promise of hope and glory and redemption for yourself and all the world.

Then you will see in the blessed sacrament of the Lord's body and blood, a sure sign and warrant, handed down from land to land, and age to age, from year to year, and from father to son, that these promises shall come true; that hope shall become fact; that not one of the Lord's words shall fail, or pass away; till all be fulfilled.

III.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.—ISAIAH lxi. 1.

My friends, I do entreat those of you who wish to get any real good from this sermon, to listen to me carefully all through it. Not that I have to complain of you in general for not attending to me. I thank God, and thank you, that you do listen to what is said in this pulpit. But there are many people who have a bad trick of minding the preacher carefully enough for a minute or two, and then letting their wits wander, and think about something else; and then if any word in the sermon strikes them, waking up suddenly, and thinking again for a little, and then letting their thoughts run wild again; and so on. Whereby it happens that they only recollect a few scraps of the sermon, a word here, and a sentence there, and get into their heads all sorts of mistakes and false notions about the preacher's meaning.

That is not right; that is not worthy of reasonable grown men: that is only pardonable in little scatter-brained children. Men and women should listen steadily, reverently throughout; so, and so only, will

they be able to judge of the message which the preacher brings them. Listen to me, therefore, all through this sermon, and may God give you grace to understand it and lay it to heart, for it is the good news of the kingdom of God.

You recollect, I hope, that I have often told you, that the Lord Jesus Christ's words would never pass away; that His prophecies are continually coming true, and being fulfilled over and over again. Now this text is not one of His prophecies, but it is a prophecy about Him; one which He fulfilled, and which He has been fulfilling again and again. He is fulfilling it, as I believe, more than ever, now in these very days.

If you will look at the 61st chapter of Isaiah, you will find this prophecy; and you will find, too, what will surprise you at first, that Isaiah was speaking of himself. He says, "That the Spirit of the Lord was upon *him*" — Isaiah — "because the Lord had appointed *him* to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, and deliverance to the captives, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Isaiah must have spoken truly about himself. He could not have meant to tell a falsehood, to say a thing was true of himself which was only true of Jesus, who did not come till 800 years afterwards. And he did speak the truth: you cannot read his prophecies without seeing that the Spirit of the Lord was indeed upon him; that the words which he spoke must have comforted all those who were sorrowing for their sins and the sins of the nation in their time. We know, for a fact, that his prophecies came true; that the Jewish captives were delivered and brought back out of Judæa to Jerusalem again, and that Jerusalem was rebuilt as Isaiah prophesied, and the Jewish nation

raised to far greater holiness, and prosperity, and happiness than it had ever been in before. And yet 800 years afterwards the Lord took those very same words to Himself, and said, that *He* fulfilled them. He read them aloud once in a Jewish synagogue, out of the book of the prophet Isaiah; and then told the congregation, "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears." And again, as we read in the Gospel for this day, when John the Baptist sent to ask Him if He was really the Christ, He made use of another prophecy of Isaiah, and told John's disciples that He *was* the Christ, because He was fulfilling that prophecy; because He *was* making the deaf hear, and the blind see, and preaching the gospel to the poor. Now, how is that? Could Isaiah be right in applying those words to himself, and yet Christ be right in applying them to Himself? Can a prophecy be fulfilled twice over?

No doubt it can, my friends, and two hundred times over. No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation, says St. Peter. That is, it does not apply to any one private, particular thing that is to happen. Every prophecy of Scripture goes on fulfilling itself more and more, as time rolls on and the world grows older. St. Peter tells us the reason why. No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation; because it does not come from the will of man, from any invention or discovery of poor short-sighted human beings, who can only judge by what they see around them in their own times: but holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. And who is the Holy Spirit? The Spirit of God; the everlasting Spirit; the Spirit who cannot change, for He *is* God. The Spirit who searcheth the deep things of God, and teaches them to men. And what are

the deep things of God? They are eternal as God is. Eternal laws; everlasting rules which cannot alter. That is the meaning of it all. The Spirit of God is the Spirit which teaches men the laws of God; the unchangeable rules and ordinances by which He governs all heaven and earth, and men, and nations; the laws which come into force, not once only, but always; the laws of God which are working round us now, just as much as they were eighteen hundred years ago, just as much as they were in Isaiah's time. Therefore it is, that I said that these old Jewish prophecies, which were inspired by the Holy Spirit, are coming true now, and will keep on coming true, time after time, in their proper place and order, and whensoever the times are fit for them, even to the end of the world.

But again, we read that the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. And what are the things of Christ? They must be eternal things, unchangeable things, for Christ is unchangeable—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is over all, God blessed for ever. To Him all power is given in heaven and earth. He reigns, and He will reign. Do you think He is less a Saviour now, than He was when he spoke those things to John's disciples? Do you think He is less able to hear and to help than He was in John's time? Do you think He used to care about people's bodies then, but that He only cares about their souls now? Do you think that He is less compassionate, and less merciful, as well as less powerful, than He was when He made the blind see, and the lame walk, and the deaf hear, in Judæa of old?

Less powerful! less compassionate! One would have expected that Christ was *more* powerful, *more*

compassionate, if that were possible. At least one would expect that His power and compassion would show itself more and more, and make itself felt more and more, year by year, and age by age; more and more healing disease; more and more comforting sorrow; more and still more casting out cunning and evil spirits, till He had put all under His feet. He Himself said it should be so. He always spoke of His own kingdom as a thing which was to grow and increase by laws of its own, men knew not how, but He knew. Like seed cast into the ground, His kingdom was, He said, at first the smallest of all seeds; but it was to grow, and take root, and spread into a mighty tree, He said, till the very birds in the air lodged in the branches of it; and David's words should be fulfilled, "Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast." And does not St. Paul speak of His kingdom in the same way, as a kingdom which should grow? that He was to reign till He had put all enemies under His feet? that He would deliver at last the whole creation? the earth on which we stand, the dumb animals around us? For, as St. Paul says, the whole creation is groaning in labour-pangs, waiting to be raised into a higher state. And it shall be raised. The whole creation shall be set free into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

What does that mean? How can I tell you?

This I can tell you, that it cannot mean that Jesus Christ was merciful enough to heal people's bodies at first, but that He has given up doing it now, and will never do it again. "Well, but," some would say, "what does all this come to? You are merely telling us what we knew before—that if any of us are cured from disease, or raised up from a sick bed, it is all the Lord's doing." If you do believe that, really, my

friends, happy are you! Many of you, I think, *do* believe it. The poor are more inclined to believe it, I think, than the rich. But even in the mouths of the poor one often hears words which make one suspect that they do *not* believe it. I am very much afraid that a great many have got into the trick of saying that it was God's mercy that they were cured, and that it pleased the Lord to raise them up from a sick bed, very much as a piece of cant. They say the words by rote, because they have been accustomed to hear them said by others, without thinking of the meaning of them; just as, on the other hand, a great many people curse and swear without thinking of the awful oaths they use. Ay, and often enough the very same persons will say that it was the Lord's mercy they were cured of their sickness; and then, if they get into a passion, pray the very same Lord to do that to the bodies and souls of their neighbours which it is a shame to speak of here. Out of the same mouth proceed blessings and cursings: showing that whether or not they are in earnest in cursing, they are not earnest in blessing.

Again: If people really believed that it was the Lord Jesus Christ who cured their sicknesses for them, they would behave, when they got well, more as the Lord Jesus Christ would wish them to behave. They would show forth their thankfulness not only with their lips, but in their lives. You who believe—you who *say*—that Christ has cured your sicknesses, show your faith by your works. Live like those who are alive again from the dead; who are not your own, but bought with a price, and bound to work for God with your bodies and your spirits, which are His—*then*, and then only, can either God or man believe you.

Again: There is a third reason which makes one

suspect that people do not mean what they say about this matter. I think too many say, "It has pleased God," merely as an empty form of words, when all they mean is, "What must be, must, and it cannot be helped." Else, why do they say, "It has pleased the Lord to send me sickness?" What is the use of saying, "It has pleased the Lord to cure me," when you say in the same breath, "It has pleased the Lord to make me ill?" I know you will say that, "Of course, whatever happens must be the Lord's will; if it did not please Him it would not happen." I do not care for such words; I will have nothing to do with them. I will neither entangle you nor myself in those endless disputings and questions about freewill and necessity, which never yet have come to any conclusion, and never will, because they are too deep for poor short-sighted human beings like us. "To the law and to the testimony," say I. I will hold to the words of the Bible; what it says, I will say; what it does not say I will *not* say, to please any man's system of doctrines. And I say from the Bible that we have no more right to say, "It has pleased the Lord to make me sick," than, "It has pleased the Lord to make me a sinner." Scripture everywhere speaks of sickness as a real evil and a curse—a breaking of the health, and order, and strength, and harmony of God's creation. It speaks of madmen as possessed with evil spirits; did *that* please God? The woman who was bowed with a spirit of infirmity, and could not lift herself up—did our Lord say that it had pleased God to make her a wretched cripple? No; he spoke of her as this daughter of Israel, whom Satan had bound, and not God, this eighteen years; and that was His reason for healing her, even on the sabbath-day, because her disease was not the work of

God, but of the cruel, disordering, destroying evil spirit which is at enmity with God. That was why Christ cured her. And *that*—for this is the point I have been coming to, step by step—that was the reason why, when John the Baptist sent to ask if Jesus was the Christ, our Lord answered: "Go and show John again those things which ye do see and hear: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Do not be in a hurry, my friends, and suppose that our Lord meant merely: "Tell John what wonderful miracles I am working." If He had meant that why would He have put in as the last proof that He was the Christ, that He was preaching the gospel to the poor? What wonderful miracle was there in *that?* No: it was as if He had said: "Go and tell John that I am the Christ, because I am the great physician, the healer and deliverer of body and soul: one who will and can cure the loathsome diseases, the uselessness, the misery, the ignorance of the poorest and meanest." He has proved Himself the Christ by showing not only His boundless power, but His boundless love and mercy; and *that,* not only to men's souls, but to their bodies also. To prove Himself the Christ by wonderful and astonishing miracles was exactly what He would *not* do. He refused, when the Scribes and Pharisees came and asked of Him a sign from heaven to prove that He was Christ—wanting Him, I suppose, to bring some apparition, or fiery comet, or great voice out of the sky, to astonish them with His power; He told them peremptorily that He would give them no such thing: and yet He said that His mighty works did prove Him to be Christ; He pronounced woe against

Chorazin and Bethsaida for not believing Him on account of His mighty works: He told the Scribes and Pharisees that they ought to believe on Him merely for His works' sake. And why would they not believe on Him! Just because they could not see that God's power was shown more in healing and delivering sufferers, than in astonishing and destroying. They could not see that God's perfect likeness shone out in Christ—that He was the express image of the Father, just because He went about doing *good*, and healing all manner of sicknesses and all manner of infirmities among the people. But so it is, my friends! Jesus is the Saviour, the deliverer, the great physician, the healer of soul and body. Not a pang is felt or a tear shed on earth, but He sorrows over it. Not a human being on earth dies young, but He, as I believe, sorrows over it. What it is which prevents Him healing every sickness, soothing every sorrow, wiping away every tear *now*, we cannot tell. But this we *can* tell, that it is His will that none should perish. This we *can* tell; that He is willing as ever to heal the sick, to cleanse the leper, to cast out devils, to teach the ignorant, to bind up the broken-hearted. This we *can* tell; that He will go on doing so more and more, year by year, and age by age. This we *can* tell, from Scripture, that Christ is stronger than the devil. This we *can* tell; that Christ, and all good men, the spirits of just men made perfect, the wise and the great in God's sight, who have left us their books, their sayings, their writings, as precious health-giving heirlooms—have been fighting, and are fighting, and will fight to the end against the devil, and sin, and oppression, and misery, and disease, and everything which spoils and darkens the face of God's good earth. And this we *can* tell; that they will conquer at the last, because

Christ is stronger than the devil; good is stronger than evil; light is stronger than darkness; God's Spirit, the giver of life, and health, and order, is stronger than all the evil customs, and ignorance, and carelessness, and cruelty, and superstition, which makes miserable the lives and, as far as we can see, destroys the souls of thousands. Yes, I say, Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of health and deliverance for body and soul; and it will conquer, and it will spread, and it will grow, till the nations of the world have become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. Christ reigns, and Christ will reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet; and the last of His enemies which shall be destroyed is *Death*. Death is His enemy. He has conquered death by rising from the dead. And the day will come when death will be no more —when sickness and sorrow shall be unknown, and God shall wipe away tears from all eyes. I say it again—never forget it—Christ is King, and His kingdom is a kingdom of health, and life, and deliverance from all evil. It always has been so, from the first time our Lord cured the leper in Galilee; it will be so to the end of the world. And, therefore—to come back to the very place from which I started at the beginning of my sermon—therefore, whenever one of the days of the Lord is at hand, whenever God's kingdom makes a great step forward, this same prophecy in our text is fulfilled in some striking and wonderful way. And I say it is fulfilled now in these days more than it ever has been. Christ is healing the sick, cleansing the leper, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, and preaching the gospel to the poor, seven times more in these days in which we live than He did when He walked upon earth in Judæa.

Do you doubt my words? At all events you con-

fess that the cure of all diseases comes from Christ. Then consider, I beseech you, how many more diseases are cured now than were formerly. One may say that the knowledge of medicine is not one hundred years old. Nothing, my friends, makes me feel more strongly what a wonderful and blessed time we live in, and how Christ is showing forth mighty works among us, than this same sudden miraculous improvement in the art of healing, which has taken place within the memory of man. Any country doctor now knows more, thank God, or ought to know, than the greatest London physicians did two generations ago. New cures for deafness, blindness, lameness, every disease that flesh is heir to, are being discovered year by year. Oh, my friends! you little know what Christ is doing among you, for your bodies as well as for your souls. There is not a parish in England now in which the poorest as well as the richest are not cured yearly of diseases, which, if they had lived a hundred years ago, would have killed them without hope or help. And then, when one looks at these great and blessed plans for what is called sanitary reform, at the sickness and the misery which has been done away with already by attending to them, even though they have only just begun to be put in practice—our hearts must be hard indeed if we do not feel that Christ is revealing to us the gifts of healing far more bountifully and mercifully than even He did to the first apostles.

But you will say, perhaps, the dead are not raised in these days. Oh, my friends! which shows Christ's mercy most, to raise those who are already dead, or to save those alive who are about to die? Those in this church who have read history know as well as I, how in our forefathers' time people died in England by thousands of diseases which are scarcely ever deadly

now; ay, of diseases which have now actually vanished out of the land, before the new light of medicine and of civilisation which Christ has revealed to us in these days. For one child who lived and grew up in old times, two live and grow up now. In London alone there are not half as many deaths in proportion to the number of people as there were a hundred years ago. And is not that a mightier work of Christ's power and love than if He had raised a few dead persons to life?

And now for the last part of our Lord's witness about Himself. To the poor the gospel is preached. Oh! my friends, is not *that* coming true in our days as it never came true before? Look back only fifty years, and consider the difference between the doctrines which were preached to the poor and the doctrines which are preached to them now. Look round you and see how everywhere earnest and godly ministers have sprung up, of all sects and opinions, as well as of the Church of England, not only to preach the gospel in the pulpit, but to carry it to the sick bedside of the lonely cottage, to the prison, and to those fearful sties, worse than prisons, where in our great cities the heathen poor live crowded together. Look at the teaching which the poor man can get now, compared to what he used to—the sermons, the Bibles, the tracts, the lending libraries, the schools—just consider the hundreds of thousands of pounds which are subscribed every year to educate the children of the poor, and then say whether Christ is not working a mighty work among us in these days. I know that not half as much is done as ought to be done in that way; not half as much as will be done; and what is done will have to be done better than it has been done yet; but still, can anyone in this

church who is fifty years old deny that there is a most enormous and blessed improvement which is growing and spreading every year? Can anyone deny that the gospel is preached to the poor now in a way that it never was before within the memory of man?

Now, recollect that this is an Advent sermon—a sermon which proclaims to you that Christ is *come*; yes, He is come—come never to leave mankind again! Christ reigns over the earth, and will reign for ever. At certain great and important times in the world's history, like this present time, times which He Himself calls "days of the Lord," He shows forth His power, and the mightiness and mercy of His kingdom, more than at others. But still He is always with us; we have no need to run up and down to look for Christ: to say, Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Him down? Who shall descend into the deep to bring Him up? For the kingdom of God, as He told us Himself, is among us, and within us. Yes, within us. All these wonderful improvements and discoveries, all things beneficial to men which are found out year by year, though they seem to be of men's invention, are really of Christ's revealing, the fruits of the kingdom of God within us, of the Spirit of God, who is teaching men, though they too often will not believe it; though they disclaim God's Spirit and take all the glory to themselves. Truly Christ is among us; and our eyes are held, and we see Him not. That is our English sin—the sin of unbelief, the root of every other sin. Christ works among us, and we will not own Him. Truly, Jesus Christ may well say of us English at this day, There were ten cleansed, but where are the nine? How few are there, who return to give glory to God! Oh, consider what I say; the kingdom of God is among us now; its bless-

ings are growing richer, fuller among us every day. Beware, lest if we refuse to acknowledge that kingdom and Christ the King of it, it be taken away from us, and given to some other nation, who will bring forth the fruits of it, fellow-help and brotherly kindness, purity and sobriety, and all the fruits of the Spirit of God.

IV.

A PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Rejoice in the Lord always.—PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

THIS is the beginning of the Epistle for to-day, the Sunday before Christmas. We will try to find out why it was chosen for to-day, and what lesson we may learn from it.

Now Christmas-time was always a time of rejoicing among many heathen nations, and long before the Lord Jesus Christ came. That was natural and reasonable enough, if you will consider it. For now the shortest day is past. The sun is just beginning to climb higher and higher in the sky each day, and brings back with him longer sunshine, and shorter darkness, and spring flowers, and summer crops, and a whole new year, with new hopes, new work, new lessons, new blessings. The old year, with all its labours and all its pleasures, and all its sorrows and all its sins, is dying, all but gone. It lies behind us, never to return. The tears which we shed, we never can shed again. The mistakes we made, we have a chance of mending in the year to come. And so the heathens felt, and rejoiced that another year was dying, another year going to be born.

And Christmas was a time of rejoicing too, because

the farming work was done. The last year's crop was housed; the next year's wheat was sown; the cattle were safe in yard and stall; and men had time to rest, and draw round the fire in the long winter nights, and make merry over the earnings of the past year, and the hopes and plans of the year to come. And so over all this northern half of the world Christmas was a merry time.

But the poor heathens did not know the Lord. They did not know who to thank for all their Christmas blessings. And so some used to thank the earth for the crops, and the sun for coming back again to lengthen the days, as if the earth and sun moved of themselves. And some used to thank false gods and ancient heroes, who, perhaps, never really lived at all. And some, perhaps the greater number, thanked nothing and no one, but just enjoyed themselves, and took no thought, as too many do now at Christmas-time. So the world went on; Christmas after Christmas; and the times of that ignorance, as St. Paul says, God winked at. But when the fulness of time was come, He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, to be the judge and ruler of the world; and commanded all men everywhere to repent, and turn from all their vanities to serve the living God, who had made heaven and earth, and all things in them.

He did not wish them to give up their Christmas mirth. No: all along He had been trying to teach them by it about His love to them. As St. Paul told them once, God had not left Himself without witness; in that He gave them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness.

God did not wish them, or us, to give up Christmas mirth. The apostles did not wish it. The great men, true followers of the apostles, who shaped our Prayer-

book for us, and sealed it with their life-blood, did not wish it. They did not wish farmers, labourers, servants, masters, to give up one of the old Christmas customs; but to remember who made Christmas, and its blessings; in short, to rejoice in The Lord. Our forefathers had been thanking the wrong persons for Christmas. Henceforward we were to thank the right person, The Lord, and rejoice in Him. Our forefathers had been rejoicing in the sun, and moon, and earth; in wise and valiant kings who had lived ages before; in their own strength, and industry, and cunning. Now they were to rejoice in Him who made sun, and moon, and earth; in Him who sent wise and valiant kings and leaders; in Him who gives all strength, and industry, and cunning; by whose inspiration comes all knowledge of agriculture, and manufacture, and all the arts which raise men above the beasts that perish. So their Christmas joys were to go on, year by year while the world lasted: but they were to go on rightly, and not wrongly. Men were to rejoice in The Lord, and then His blessing would be on them, and the thanks and praise which they offered Him, He would return with interest, in fresh blessings for the coming year.

Therefore, I think, this Epistle was chosen for to-day, the Sunday before Christmas, to show us in whom we are to rejoice; and, therefore, to show us how we are to rejoice. For we must not take the first verse of the Epistle and forget the rest. That would neither be wise nor reverent toward St. Paul, who wrote the whole, and meant the whole to stand together as one discourse; or to the blessed and holy men who chose it for our lesson on this day. Let us go on, then, with the Epistle, line by line, throughout.

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." As much as to say, you cannot rejoice too

much, you cannot overdo your happiness, thankfulness, merriment. You do not know half—no, not the thousandth part of God's love and mercy to you, and you never will know. So do not be afraid of being too happy, or think that you honour God by wearing a sour face, when He is heaping blessings on you, and calling on you to smile and sing. But "let your moderation be known unto all men." There is a right and a wrong way of being merry. There is a mirth, which is no mirth; whereof it is written, in the midst of that laughter there is a heaviness, and the end thereof is death. Drunkenness, gluttony, indecent words and jests and actions, these are out of place on Christmas-day, and in the merriment to which the pure and holy Lord Jesus calls you all. They are rejoicing in the flesh and the devil, and not in the Lord at all; and whosoever indulges in them, and fancies them merriment, is keeping the devil's Christmas, and not Jesus Christ's. So let your moderation be known to all men. Be *merry and wise*. The fool lets his mirth master him, and carry him away, till he forgets himself, and says and does things of which he is ashamed when he gets up next morning, sick and sad at heart. The wise man remembers that, let the occasion be as joyful a one as it may, "the Lord is at hand." Christ's eye is on him, while he is eating, and drinking, and laughing. He is not afraid of Christ's eye, because, though it is Divine, it is a human, loving, smiling eye; rejoicing in the happiness of His poor, hard-worked brothers here below. But he remembers that it is a holy eye, too; an eye which looks with sadness and horror on anything which is wrong; on all drunkenness, quarrelling, indecency; and so on in all his merriment, he is still master of himself. He remembers that his soul is nobler than his body; that his will must be stronger than his

appetite; and so he keeps himself in check; he keeps his tongue from evil, and his stomach from sottishness, and though he may be, and ought to be, the merriest of the whole party, yet he takes care to let his moderation, his sobriety, be known and plain to everyone, remembering that the Lord is at hand.

And that man—I will stand surety for him—will be the one who will rise from his bed next morning, best able to carry out the next verse of the Epistle, and "be careful for nothing."

Now that is no easy matter here in England; to rich and poor, Christmas is the time for settling accounts and paying debts. And therefore in England, where living is dear, and everyone, more or less, struggling to pay his way, Christmas is often a very anxious, disturbing time of year. Many a family, for all their economy, cannot clear themselves at the year's end; and though they are able to forget that now and then, thank God, through great part of the year, yet they cannot forget it at Christmas. But, as I said, the man who at Christmas-time will be most able to be careful for nothing, will be the man whose moderation has been known to everyone; for he will, if he has lived the year through in the same temper in which he has spent Christmas, have been moderate in his expenses; he will have kept himself from empty show, and pretending to be richer than he is. He will have kept himself from throwing away his money in drink, and kept his daughters from throwing away money in dress, which is just what too many, in their foolish, godless, indecent hurry to get rid of their own children off their hands do not do.

And he will be the man who will be in the best humour, and have the clearest brain, to kneel down when he gets up to his daily work, and "in every-

thing, by prayer and supplication, make his requests known to God." And then, whether he can make both ends meet or not, whether he can begin next year free from debt or not, still "the peace of God will keep his heart." He may be unable to clear himself, but still he will know that he has a loving and merciful Father in heaven, who has allowed distress and difficulty to come on him only as a lesson and an education. That this distress came because God chose, and that when God chooses it will go away—and that till then—considering that the Lord God sent it—it had better *not* go away. He will believe that God's gracious promises stand true—that the Lord will never let those who trust in Him be confounded and brought to shame—that He will let none of us be tempted beyond what we are able, but will always with the temptation make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it. And so the peace of God which passes understanding, will keep that man's mind. And in whom? "In Jesus Christ." Now what did St. Paul mean by putting in the Lord Jesus Christ's name there? what is the meaning of "in Jesus Christ"? This is what it means; it means what Christmas-day means. A man may say, "Your sermon promises fine things, but I am miserable and poor; it promises a holy and noble rejoicing to everyone, but I am unholy and mean. It promises peace from God, and I am sure I am not at peace: I am always fretting and quarrelling; I quarrel with my wife, my children, and my neighbours, and they quarrel with me; and worst of all," says the poor man, "I quarrel with myself. I am full of discontented, angry, sulky, anxious, unhappy thoughts; my heart is dark and sad and restless within me—would God I were peaceful, but I am not: look in my face and see!"

True, my friend, but on Christmas-day the Son of God was born into the world, a man like you.

"Well," says the poor man, "but what has that to do with my anxiety and my ill-temper?"

It would take the whole year through, my friend, to show you all that it has to do with you and your unhappiness. All the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels of the year are set out to show you what it has to do with you. But in the meanwhile, before Christmas-day comes, consider this one thing: Why are you anxious? Because you do not know what is to happen to you? Then Christmas-day is a witness to you, that whatsoever happens to you, happens to you by the will and rule of Jesus Christ, The perfect man; think of that. *The perfect man*—who understands men's hearts and wants, and all that is good for them, and has all the wisdom and power to give us what is good, which we want ourselves. And what makes you unhappy, my friends? Is it not at heart just this one thing—you are unhappy because you are not pleased with yourselves? And you are not pleased with yourselves because you know you ought not to be pleased with yourselves; and you know you ought not to be pleased with yourselves, because you know, in the bottom of your hearts, that God is not pleased with you? What cure, what comfort for such thoughts can we find?—This.

The child who was born in a manger on Christmas-day, and grew up in poverty, and had not where to lay His head, went through all shame and sorrow to which man is heir. He, Jesus, the poor child of Bethlehem, is Lord and King of heaven and earth. He will feel for us; He will understand our temptations; He has been poor himself, that He might feel for the poor; He has been evil spoken of, that He

might feel for those whose tempers are sorely tried. He bore the sins and felt the miseries of the whole world, that He might feel for us when we are wearied with the burden of life, and confounded by the remembrance of our own sins.

Oh, my friends, consider only Who was born into the world on Christmas-day; and that thought alone will be enough to fill you with rejoicing and hope for yourselves and all the world, and with the peace of God which passes understanding, the peace which the angels proclaimed to the shepherds on the first Christmas night—"On earth peace, and good will toward men"—and if God wills us good, my friends, what matter who wishes us evil?

V.

CHRISTMAS-DAY.

He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a slave.—PHILIPPIANS ii. 7.

ON Christmas-day, 1851 years ago, if we had been at Rome, the great capital city, and mistress of the whole world, we should have seen a strange sight—strange, and yet pleasant. All the courts of law were shut; no war was allowed to be proclaimed, and no criminals punished. The sorrow and the strife of that great city had stopped, in great part, for three days, and all people were giving themselves up to merriment and good cheer—making up quarrels, and giving and receiving presents from house to house. And we should have seen, too, a pleasanter sight than that. For those three days of Christmas-time were days of safety and merriment for the poor slaves—tens of thousands of whom—men, women, and children—the Romans had brought out of all the countries in the world—many of our forefathers and mothers among them—and kept them there in cruel bondage and shame, worked and fed, bought and sold, like beasts, and not like human beings, not able to call their lives or their bodies their own, forced to endure any shame or sin which their tyrants required of them, and liable any moment to be beaten, tortured, or crucified at the mercy of cruel and foul masters and mistresses. But on that Christmas-day, according to an

old custom, they were allowed for once in the whole year to play at being free, to dress in their masters' and mistresses' clothes, to say what they thought of them boldly, without fear of punishment, and to eat and drink at their masters' tables, while their masters and mistresses waited on them. It was an old custom, that, among the heathen Romans, which their forefathers, who were wiser and better than they, had handed down to them. They had forgotten, perhaps, what it meant: but still we may see what it must have meant: That the old forefathers of the Romans had intended to remind their children every year by that custom, that their poor hard-worked slaves were, after all, men and women as much as their masters; that they had hearts and consciences, and sense in them, and a right to speak what they thought, as much as their masters; that they, as much as their masters, could enjoy the good things of God's earth, from which man's tyranny had shut them out; and to remind those cruel masters, by making them once every year wait on their own slaves at table, that they were, after all, equal in the sight of God, and that it was more noble for those who were rich, and called themselves gentlemen, to help others, than to make others slave for them.

I do not mean, of course, that those old heathens understood all this clearly. You will see, by the latter part of my sermon, why they could not understand it clearly. But there must have been some sort of dim, confused suspicion in their minds that it was wrong and cruel to treat human beings like brute beasts, which made them set up that strange old custom of letting their slaves play at being free once every Christmas-tide.

But if on this same day, 1851 years ago, instead of

being in the great city of Rome, we had been in the little village of Bethlehem in Judæa, we might have seen a sight stranger still; a sight which we could not have fancied had anything to do with that merry-making of the slaves at Rome, and yet which had everything to do with it.

We should have seen, in a mean stable, among the oxen and the asses, a poor maiden, with her new-born baby laid in the manger, for want of any better cradle, and by her her husband, a poor carpenter, whom all men thought to be the father of her child. . . . There, in the stable, amid the straw, through the cold winter days and nights, in want of many a comfort which the poorest woman, and the poorest woman's child would need, they stayed there, that young maiden and her new-born babe. . . . That young maiden was the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that poor baby was the Son of God. The Son of God, in whose likeness all men were made at the beginning; the Son of God, who had been ruling the whole world all along; who brought the Jews out of slavery, a thousand years before, and destroyed their cruel tyrants in the Red Sea; the Son of God, who had been all along punishing cruel tyrants and oppressors, and helping the poor out of misery, whenever they called on Him. The Light which lightens every man who comes into the world, was that poor babe. It was He who gives men reason, and conscience, and a tender heart, and delight in what is good, and shame and uneasiness of mind when they do wrong. It was He who had been stirring up, year by year, in those cruel Romans' hearts, the feeling that there was something wrong in grinding down their slaves, and put into their minds the notion of giving them their Christmas rest

and freedom. He had been keeping up that good old custom for a witness and a warning that all men were equal in His sight; that all men had a right to liberty of speech and conscience; a right to some fair share in the good things of the earth, which God had given to all men freely to enjoy. But those old Romans would not take the warning. They kept up the custom, but they shut their eyes to the lesson of it. They went on conquering and oppressing all the nations of the earth, and making them their slaves. And now He was come—He Himself, the true Lord of the earth, the true pattern of men. He was come to show men to whom this world belonged: He was come to show men in what true power, true nobleness consisted—not in making others minister to us, but in ministering to them: He was come to set a pattern of what a man should be; He was the Son of Man—THE MAN of all men—and therefore He had come with good news to all poor slaves, and neglected, hard-worked creatures: He had come to tell them that He cared for them; that He could and would deliver them; that they were God's children, and His brothers, just as much as their Roman masters; and that He was going to bring a terrible time upon the earth—"days of the Son of Man," when He would judge all men, and show who were true men and who were not—such a time as had never been before, or would be again; when that great Roman empire, in spite of all its armies, and its cunning, and its riches, plundered from every nation under heaven, would crumble away and perish shamefully and miserably off the face of the earth, before tribes of poor, untaught, savage men, the brothers and countrymen of those very slaves whom the Romans fancied were so much below them, that they had a right to treat them like the beasts which perish.

That was the message which that little child lying in the manger there at Bethlehem, had been sent out from God to preach. Do you not see now what it had to do with that strange merry-making of the poor slaves in Rome, which I showed you at the beginning of my sermon?

If you do not, I must remind you of the song, which, St. Luke says, the shepherds in Judæa heard the angels sing, on this night 1851 years ago. That song tells us the meaning of that babe's coming. That song tells us what that babe's coming had to do with the poor slaves of Rome, and with all poor creatures who have suffered and sorrowed on this earth, before or since.

"Glory to God in the highest," they sang, "and on earth peace, good will to men."

Glory to God in the highest. That little babe, lying in the manger among the cattle, was showing what was the very highest glory of the great God who had made heaven and earth. Not to show His power and His majesty, but to show His condescension and His love. To stoop, to condescend, to have mercy, to forgive, that is the highest glory of God. That is the noblest, the most Godlike thing for God or man. And God showed that when He sent down His only-begotten Son—not to strike the world to atoms with a touch, not to hurl sinners into everlasting flame, but to be born of a village maiden, to take on Himself all the shame and weakness and sorrow, to which man is heir, even to death itself; to make Himself of no reputation, and take on Himself the form of a slave, and forgive sinners, and heal the sick, and comfort the outcast and despised, that He might show what God was like—show forth to men, as a poor maiden's son, the brightness of God's glory, and the express likeness of His person.

"And on earth peace" they sang. Men had been quarrelling and fighting then, and men are quarrelling and fighting now. That little babe in the manger was come to show them how and why they were all to be at peace with each other. For what causes all the war and quarrelling in the world, but selfishness? Selfishness breeds pride, passion, spite, revenge, covetousness, oppression. The strong care for themselves, and try to help themselves at the expense of the weak, by force and tyranny; the weak care for themselves in their turn, and try to help themselves at the expense of the strong, by cunning and cheating. No one will condescend, give way, sacrifice his own interest for his neighbour's, and hence come wars between nations, quarrels in families, spite and grudges between neighbours. But in the example of that little child of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ the Lord, God was saying to men, "Acquaint yourselves with Me, and be at peace." God is not selfish; it is our selfishness which has made us unlike God. God so loved the sinful world, that He gave His only-begotten Son for it. Is that an action like ours? The Son of God so obeyed His Father, and so loved this world, that He made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the likeness of a slave, and became obedient to death, even to the most fearful and shameful of all deaths, the death of the cross; not for Himself, but for those who did not know Him, hated Him, killed Him. In short, He sacrificed Himself for us. That is God's likeness. Self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, proved Himself the Son of God, and the express likeness of the Father, by sacrificing Himself for us. Sacrifice yourselves then for each other! Give up your own pride, your own selfishness, your own interest for each other, and you will be all at peace at once.

But the angels sang, "Good will toward men." Without that, their song would not have been complete. For we are all ready to say, at such words as I have been speaking, "Ah! pleasant enough, and pretty enough, if they were but possible; but they are not possible. It is in the nature of man to be selfish. Men have gone on warring, grudging, struggling, competing, oppressing, cheating from the beginning, and they will do so to the end."

Yes, it is not in the *nature* of man to do otherwise. In as far as man yields to his nature, and is like the selfish brute beasts, it is not possible for him to do anything but go on quarrelling, and competing, and cheating to the last. But what man's nature cannot do, God's grace can. God's good will is toward you. He loves you, He wills—and if He wills, what is too hard for Him?—He wills to raise you out of this selfish, quarrelsome life of sin, into a loving, brotherly, peaceful life of righteousness. His spirit, the spirit of love by which He made and guides all heaven and earth, the spirit of love in which He gave His only Son for you, the spirit of love in which His Son Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for you, and took on Himself a meaner state than any of you can ever have—the likeness of a slave—that spirit is promised to you, and ready for you. That little baby in the manger at Bethlehem—God sacrificing Himself for you in the spirit of love—is a sign that that spirit of love is the spirit of God, and therefore the only right spirit for you and me, who are men and women made in the image of God. That babe in the manger at Bethlehem is a sign to you and me, that God will freely give us that spirit of love if we ask for it. For He would not have set us that example, if He had not meant us to follow it, and He would not ask us to follow it, if He did not

intend to give us the means of following it. Therefore, my friends, it is written, Ask and ye shall receive. If your heavenly Father spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him for you, will He not with Him likewise freely give you all things? Oh! ask and you shall receive. However poor, ignorant, sinful you may be, God's promises are ready for you, signed and sealed by the bread and wine on that table, the memorial of Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem. Ask, and you shall receive! Comfort from sorrow, peaceful assurance of God's good will toward you, deliverance from your sins, and a share in the likeness of Him who on this day made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a slave.

VI.

TRUE ABSTINENCE.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.—1 Cor. ix. 27.

In the Collect for this day we have just been praying to God, to give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to our spirit, we may follow His godly motions.

Now we ought to have meant something when we said these words. What did we mean by them? Perhaps some of us did not understand them. They could not be expected to mean anything by them. But it is a sad thing, a very sad thing, that people will come to church Sunday after Sunday, and repeat by rote words which they do not understand, words by which they therefore mean nothing, and yet never care or try to understand them.

What are the words there for, except to be understood? All of you call people foolish, who submit to have prayers read in their churches in a foreign language, which none, at least of the poor, can understand. But what right have you to call them foolish, if you, whose Prayer-books are written in English, take no trouble to find out the meaning of them? Would to Heaven that you would try to find out the meaning of the Prayer-book! Would to Heaven that

the day would come, when anyone in this parish who was puzzled by any doctrine of religion, or by any text in the Bible, or word in the Prayer-book, would come confidently to me, and ask me to explain it to him! God knows, I should think it an honour and a pleasure, as well as a duty. I should think no time better spent than in answering your questions. I do beseech you to ask me, every one of you, when and where you like, any questions about religion which come into your minds. Why am I put in this parish, except to teach you? and how can I teach you better, than by answering your questions? As it is, I am disheartened, and all but hopeless, at times, about the state of this parish, and the work I am trying to do here; because, though you will come and hear me, thank God, willingly enough, you do not seem yet to have gained confidence enough in me, or to have learnt to care sufficiently about the best things, to ask questions of me about them. My dear friends, if you wanted to get information about anything you really cared for, you would ask questions enough. If you wanted to know some way to a place on earth you would ask it; why not ask your way to things better than this earth can give? But whether or not you will question me I must go on preaching to you, though whether or not you care to listen is more, alas! than I can tell.

But listen to me, now, I beseech you, while I try to explain to you the meaning of the words which you have been just using in this Collect. You have asked God to give you grace to use abstinence. Now what is the meaning of abstinence? Abstinence means abstaining, refraining, keeping back of your own will from doing something which you might do. Take an example. When a man for his health's sake, or his purse's sake,

or any other good reason, drinks less liquor than he might if he chose, he abstains from liquor. He uses abstinence about liquor. There are other things in which a man may abstain. Indeed, he may abstain from doing anything he likes. He may abstain from eating too much; from lying in bed too long; from reading too much; from taking too much pleasure; from making money; from spending money; from right things; from wrong things; from things which are neither right nor wrong; on all these he may use abstinence. He may abstain for many reasons; for good ones, or for bad ones. A miser will abstain from all sorts of comforts to hoard up money. A superstitious man may abstain from comforts, because he thinks God grudges them to him, or because he thinks God is pleased by the unhappiness of His creatures, or because he has been taught, poor wretch, that if he makes himself uncomfortable in this life, he shall have more comfort, more honour, more reason for pride and self-glorification, in the life to come. Or a man may abstain from one pleasure, just to be able to enjoy another all the more; as some great gamblers drink nothing but water, in order to keep their heads clear for cheating. All these are poor reasons; some of them base, some of them wicked reasons for abstaining from anything. Therefore, abstinence is not a good thing in itself; for if a thing is good in itself, it can never be wrong. Love is good in itself, and, therefore, you cannot love anyone for a bad reason. Justice is good in itself, pity is good in itself, and, therefore, you can never be wrong in being just or pitiful.

But abstinence is not a good thing in itself. If it were, we should all be bound to abstain always from everything pleasant, and make ourselves as miserable

and uncomfortable as possible, as some superstitious persons used to do in old times. Abstinence is only good when it is used for a good reason. If a man abstains from pleasure himself, to save up for his children; if he abstains from over eating and over drinking, to keep his mind clear and quiet; if he abstains from sleep and ease, in order to have time to see his business properly done; if he abstains from spending money on himself, in order to spend it for others; if he abstains from any habit, however harmless or pleasant, because he finds it lead him towards what is wrong, and put him into temptation; then he does right; then he is doing God's work; then he may expect God's blessing; then he is trying to do what we all prayed God to help us to do, when we said, "Give us grace to use such abstinence;" then he is doing, more or less, what St. Paul says he did, "Keeping his body under, and bringing it into subjection."

For, see, the Collect does not say, "Give us grace to use abstinence," as if abstinence were a good thing in itself, but "to use such abstinence, that"—to use a certain kind of abstinence, and that for a certain purpose, and that purpose a good one; such abstinence that our flesh may be subdued to our spirit; that our flesh, the animal, bodily nature which is in us, loving ease and pleasure, may not be our master, but our servant; so that we may not follow blindly our own appetites, and do just what we like, as brute beasts which have no understanding. And our flesh is to be subdued to our spirit for a certain purpose; not because our flesh is bad, and our spirit good; not in order that we may puff ourselves up and admire ourselves, and say, as the philosophers among the heathen used, "What a strong-minded, sober, self-restraining

man I am! How fine it is to be able to look down on my neighbours, who cannot help being fond of enjoying themselves, and cannot help caring for this world's good things. I am above all that. I want nothing, and I feel nothing, and nothing can make me glad or sorry. I am master of my own mind, and own no law but my own will." The Collect gives us the true and only reason, for which it is right to subdue our appetites; which is, that we may keep our minds clear and strong enough to listen to the voice of God within our hearts and reasons; to obey the motions of God's Spirit in us; not to make our bodies our masters, but to live as God's servants.

This is St. Paul's meaning, when he speaks of keeping under his body, and bringing it into subjection. The exact word which he uses, however, is a much stronger one than merely "keeping under;" it means simply, to beat a man's face black and blue; and his reason for using such a strong word about the matter is, to show us that he thought no labour too hard, no training too sharp, which teaches us how to restrain ourselves, and keep our appetites and passions in manful and godly control.

Now, a few verses before my text, St. Paul takes an example from foot-racers. "These foot-racers," he says, "heathens though they are, and only trying to win a worthless prize, the petty honour of a crown of leaves, see what trouble they take; how they exercise their limbs; how careful and temperate they are in eating and drinking; how much pain and fatigue they go through to get themselves into perfect training for a race. How much more trouble ought we take to make ourselves fit to do God's work? For these foot-racers do all this only to gain a garland which will wither in a week; but we, to gain a garland which

will never fade away; a garland of holiness, and righteousness, and purity, and the likeness of Jesus Christ."

The next example of abstinence which St. Paul takes, is from the prize-fighters, who were very numerous and very famous, in the country in which the Corinthians lived. "I fight," he says, "not like one who beats the air;" that is, not like a man who is only brandishing his hands and sparring in jest, but like a man who knows that he has a fight to fight in hard earnest; a terrible life-long fight against sin, the world, and the devil; "and, therefore," he says, "I do as these fighters do." They, poor savage and brutal heathens as they are, go through a long and painful training. Their very practice is not play; it is grim earnest. They stand up to strike, and be struck, and are bruised and disfigured as a matter of course, in order that they may learn not to flinch from pain, or lose their tempers, or turn cowards, when they have to fight. "And so do I," says St. Paul; "they, poor men, submit to painful and disagreeable things to make them brave in their paltry battles. I submit to painful and disagreeable things, to make me brave in the great battle which I have to fight against sin, and ignorance, and heathendom." "Therefore," he says, in another place, "I take pleasure in afflictions, in persecutions, in necessities, in distresses;" and that not because those things were pleasant, they were just as unpleasant to him as to anyone else; but because they taught him to bear, taught him to be brave; taught him, in short, to become a perfect man of God.

This is St. Paul's account of his own training: in the Epistle for to-day we have another account of it; a description of the life which he led, and which he

was content to lead—"in much suffering, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watching, in fastings"—and an account, too, of the temper which he had learnt to show amid such a life of vexation, and suffering, and shame, and danger—"approving himself in all things the minister of God, by pureness, by wisdom, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the spirit of holiness, by love unfeigned;" "as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things."—In all things proving himself a true messenger from God, by being able to dare and to endure for God's sake, what no man ever would have dared and endured for his own sake.

"But"—someone may say—"St. Paul was an apostle; he had a great work to do in the world; he had to turn the heathen to God; and it is likely enough that he required to train himself, and keep strict watch over all his habits, and ways of thinking and behaving, lest he should grow selfish, lazy, cowardly, covetous, fond of ease and amusement. He had, of course, to lead a life of strange suffering and danger; and he had therefore to train himself for it. But what need have we to do as St. Paul did?"

Just as much need, my good friends, if you could see it.

Which of us has not to lead a life of suffering? We shall each and all of us, have our full share of trouble before we die, doubt it not.

And which of us has not to lead a life of danger? I do not mean bodily danger; of that, there is little enough—perhaps too little—in England now; but of danger to our hearts, minds, characters? Oh, my friends, I pity those who do not think themselves in

danger every day of their lives, for the less danger they see around them, the more danger there is. There is not only the common danger of temptation, but over and above it, the worse danger of not knowing temptation when it comes. Who will be most likely to walk into pits and mires upon the moor—the man who knows that they are there around him, or the man who goes on careless and light of heart, fancying that it is all smooth ground? Woe to you, young people, if you fancy that you are to have no woe! Danger to you, young people, if you fancy yourselves in no danger!

"This is sad and dreary news"—some of you may say. Ay, my friends, it would be sad and dreary news indeed; and this earth would be a very sad and dreary place; and life with all its troubles and temptations, would not be worth having, if it were not for the blessed news which the Gospel for this day brings us. That makes up for all the sadness of the Epistle; that gives us hope; that tells us of one who has been through life, and through death too, yet without sin. That tells us of one who has endured a thousand times more temptation than we ever shall, a thousand times more trouble than we ever shall, and yet has conquered it all; and that He who has thus been through all our temptations, borne all our weaknesses, is our King, our Saviour, who loves us, who teaches us, who has promised us His Holy Spirit, to make us like Himself, strong, brave, and patient, to endure all that man or devil, or our own low animal tempers and lusts, can do to hurt us. The Gospel for this day tells us how He went and was alone in the wilderness with the wild beasts, and yet trusted in God, His Father and ours, to keep Him safe. How He went without food forty days and nights, and yet in His extreme hunger,

refused to do the least self-willed or selfish thing to get Himself food. Is that no lesson, no message of hope for the poor man who is tempted by hunger to steal, or tempted by need to do a mean and selfish thing, to hear that the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore need and hunger far worse than his, understands all his temptations, and feels for him, and pities him, and has promised him God's Spirit to make him strong, as He himself was?

Is it no comfort to young people who are tempted to vanity, and display, and self-willed conceited longings, tempted to despise the advice of their parents and elders, and set up for themselves, and choose their own way—Is it no good news, I say, for them to hear that their Lord and Saviour was tempted to it also, and conquered it?—That He will teach them to answer the temptation as He did, when He refused even to let angels hold Him over the temple, up between earth and heaven, for a sign and a wonder to all the Jews, because God His Father had not bidden Him to do it, and therefore He would not tempt the Lord His God?

Is it no good news, again, to those who are tempted to do perhaps one little outward wrong thing, to yield on some small point to the ways of the world, in order to help themselves on in life, to hear that their Lord and Saviour conquered that temptation too?—That He refused all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, when the devil offered them, because He knew that the devil could not give them to Him; that all wealth, and power, and glory belonged to God, and was to be got only by serving Him?

Oh do you all, young people especially, think of this. As you grow up and go out into life, you will be tempted in a hundred different ways, by things

which are pleasant—everyone knows that they are pleasant enough—but wrong. One will be tempted to be vain of dress; another to be self-conceited; another to be lazy and idle; another to be extravagant and roving; another to be over fond of amusement; another to be over fond of money; another to be over fond of liquor; another to go wrong, as too many young men and young women do, and bring themselves, and those with whom they keep company, and whom they ought, if they really love them, to respect and honour, down into sin and shame. You will all be tempted, and you will all be troubled; one by poverty, one by sickness, one by the burden of a family, one by being laughed at for trying to do right. But remember, oh remember, whenever a temptation comes upon you, that the blessed Jesus has been through it all, and conquered all, and that His will is, that you shall be holy and pure like Him, and that, therefore, if you but ask Him, He will give you strength to keep pure. When you are tempted, pray to Him: the struggle in your own minds will, no doubt, be very great; it will be very hard work for you—sin looks so pleasant on the outside! Poor souls, it is a sad struggle for you! Many a poor young fellow, who goes wrong, deserves rather to be pitied than to be punished. Well then, if no man else will pity him, Jesus, the Man of all men, will. Pray to Him! Cry aloud to Him! Ask Him to make you stout-hearted, patient, really manful, to fight against temptation. Ask Him to give you strength of mind to fight against all bad habits. Ask Him to open your eyes to see when you are in danger. Ask Him to help you to keep out of the way of temptation. Ask Him, in short, to give you grace to use such abstinence that your flesh may be subdued to your spirit. And then

you will not follow, as the beasts do, just what seems pleasant to your flesh; no, you will be able to obey Christ's godly motions, that is, to do, as well as to love, the good desires which He puts into your hearts. You will do not merely what is pleasant, but what is right; you will not be your own slaves, you will be your own masters, and God's loyal and obedient sons; you will not be, as too many are, mere animals going about in the shape of men, but truly men at heart, who are not afraid of pain, poverty, shame, trouble, or death itself, when they are in the right path, about the work to which God has called them.

But if you ask Christ to make true men and women of you, you must believe that He will give you what you ask; if you ask Him to help you, you must believe that He will and does help you—you must believe that it is He Himself who has put into your hearts the very desire of being holy and strong at all; and therefore you must believe that you can help yourselves. Help yourselves, and He will help you. If you ask for His help, He will give it. But what is the use of His giving it, if you do not use it? To him who has shall be given, and he shall have more; but from him who has not shall be taken away even what he seems to have. Therefore do not merely pray, but struggle and try *yourselves*. Train yourselves as St. Paul did; train yourselves to keep your temper; train yourselves to bear unpleasant things for the sake of your duty; train yourselves to keep out of temptation; train yourselves to be forgiving, gentle, thrifty, industrious, sober, temperate, cleanly, as modest as little children in your words, and thoughts, and conduct. And God, when He sees you trying to be all this, will help you to be so. It may be hard to educate yourselves. Life is a hard business at best—you will find it a

thousand times harder, though, if you are slaves to your own fleshly sins. But the more you struggle against sin, the less hard you will find it to fight; the more you resist the devil, the more he will flee from you; the more you try to conquer your own bad passions, the more God will help you to conquer them; it may be a hard battle, but it is a sure one. No fear but that everyone can, if he will, work out his own salvation, for it is God Himself who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. All you have to do is to give yourselves up to Him, to study His laws, to labour as well as long to keep them, and He will enable you to keep them; He will teach you in a thousand unexpected ways; He will daily renew and strengthen your hearts by the working of His Spirit, that you may more and more know, and love, and do, what is right; and you will go on from strength to strength, to the height of perfect men, to the likeness of Jesus Christ the Lord, who conquered all human temptations for your sake, that He might be a high-priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

VII.

GOOD FRIDAY.

In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.—ISAIAH lxiii. 9.

ON this very day, at this very hour, 1817 years ago, hung one nailed to a cross; bruised and bleeding, pierced and naked, dying a felon's death between two thieves; in perfect misery, in utter shame, mocked and insulted by all the great, the rich, the learned of His nation; one who had grown up as a man of low birth, believed by all to be a carpenter's son; without scholarship, money, respectability; even without a home wherein to lay His head—and here was the end of His life! True, He had preached noble words, He had done noble deeds: but what had they helped Him? They had not made the rich, the learned, the respectable, the religious believe on Him; they had not saved Him from persecution, and insult, and death. The only mourners who stood by to weep over His dying agonies were His mother, a poor country-woman; a young fisherman; and one who had been a harlot and a sinner. There was an end!

Do you know who that Man was? He was your King; the King of rich and poor; and He was your King, not in spite of His suffering all that shame and misery, but just because He suffered it; because He chose to be poor, and miserable, and despised; because

He endured the cross, despising the shame; because He took upon Himself to fulfil His Father's will, all ills which flesh is heir to—therefore He is now your King, the Saviour of the world, the poor man's friend, the Lord of heaven and earth. Is He such a King as *you* wish for?

Is He the sort of King you want, my friends? Does He fulfil your notions of what the poor man's friend should be? Do you, in your hearts, wish He had been somewhat richer, more glorious, more successful in the world's eyes—a wealthy and prosperous man, like Solomon of old? Are any of you ready to say, as the money-blinded Jews said, when they demanded their true King to be crucified, "We have no king but Cæsar?—Provided the law-makers and the authorities take care of our interests, and protect our property, and do not make us pay too many rates and taxes, that is enough for us." Will you have no king but Cæsar? Alas! those who say that, find that the law is but a weak deliverer, too weak to protect them from selfishness, and covetousness, and decent cruelty; and so Cæsar and the law have to give place to Mammon, the god of money. Do we not see it in these very days? And Mammon is weak, too. This world is not a shop, men are not merely money-makers and wages-earners. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in that sort of philosophy. Self-interest and covetousness connot keep society orderly and peaceful, let sham philosophers say what they will. And then comes tyranny, lawlessness, rich and poor staining their hands in each other's blood, as we saw happen in France two years ago; and so, after all, Mammon has to give place to Moloch, the fiend of murder and cruelty; and woe to rich and poor when he reigns over them!

Ay, woe—woe to rich and poor when they choose anyone for their king but their real and rightful Lord and Master, Jesus, the poor man, afflicted in all their afflictions, the Man of sorrows, crucified on this day.

Is He the kind of King you like? Make up your minds, my friends—make up your minds! For whether you like Him or not, your King He was, your King He is, your King He will be, blessed be God, for ever. Blessed be God, indeed! If He were not our King; if anyone in heaven or earth was Lord of us, except the Man of sorrows, the Prince of sufferers, what hope, what comfort would there be? What a horrible, black, fathomless riddle this sad, diseased, moaning world would be! No king would suit us but the Prince of sufferers—Jesus, who has borne all this world's griefs, and carried all its sorrows—Jesus, who has Himself smarted under pain and hunger, oppression and insult, treachery and desertion, who knows them all, feels for them all, and will right them all, in His own good time.

Believing in Jesus, we can travel on, through one wild parish after another, upon English soil, and see, as I have done, the labourer who tills the land worse housed than the horse he drives, worse clothed than the sheep he shears, worse nourished than the hog he feeds—and yet not despair: for the Prince of sufferers is the labourer's Saviour; He has tasted hunger, and thirst, and weariness, poverty, oppression, and neglect; the very tramp who wanders houseless on the moor-side is His brother; in his sufferings the Saviour of the world has shared, when the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, while the Son of God had not where to lay His head. He is the King of the poor, firstborn among many brethren; His tenderness is Almighty, and for the poor He has prepared deliverance, perhaps in this world, surely in the world to

come—boundless deliverance, out of the treasures of His boundless love.

Believing in Jesus, we can pass by mines, and factories, and by dungeons darker and fouler still, in the lanes and alleys of our great towns and cities, where thousands and tens of thousands of starving men, and wan women, and children grown old before their youth, sit toiling and pining in Mammon's prison-house, in worse than Egyptian bondage, to earn such pay as just keeps the broken heart within the worn-out body;—ay, we can go through our great cities, even now, and see the women, whom God intended to be Christian wives and mothers, the slaves of the rich man's greed by day, the playthings of his lust by night—and yet not despair; for we can cry, No! thou proud Mammon, money-making fiend! These are not thine, but Christ's; they belong to Him who died on the cross; and though thou heedest not their sighs, He marks them all, for He has sighed like them; though there be no pity in thee, there is in Him the pity of a man, ay, and the indignation of a God! He treasures up their tears; He understands their sorrows; His judgment of their guilt is not like thine, thou Pharisee! He is their Lord, who said, that to those to whom little was given, of them shall little be required. Generation after generation, they are being made perfect by sufferings, as their Saviour was before them; and then, woe to thee! For even as He led Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm, and signs and wonders, great and terrible, so shall He lead the poor out of their misery, and make them households like a flock of sheep; even as He led Israel through the wilderness, tender, forbearing, knowing whereof they were made, having mercy on all their brutalities, and idolatries, murmurings, and back-slidings, afflicted in all their afflictions—even while

He was punishing them outwardly, as He is punishing the poor man now—even so shall He lead this people out in His good time, into a good land and large, a land of wheat and wine, of milk and honey; a rest which He has prepared for His poor, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. He can do it; for the Almighty Deliverer is His name. He will do it; for His name is Love. He knows how to do it; for He has borne the griefs, and carried the sorrows of the poor.

Oh, sad hearts and suffering! Anxious and weary ones! Look to the cross this day! There hung your king! The King of sorrowing souls, and more, the King of sorrows. Ay, pain and grief, tyranny and desertion, death and hell, He has faced them one and all, and tried their strength, and taught them His, and conquered them right royally! And, since He hung upon that torturing cross, sorrow is divine, godlike, as joy itself. All that man's fallen nature dreads and despises, God honoured on the cross, and took unto Himself, and blessed, and consecrated for ever. And now, blessed are the poor, if they are poor in heart, as well as purse; for Jesus was poor, and theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the hungry, if they hunger for righteousness as well as food; for Jesus hungered, and they shall be filled. Blessed are those who mourn, if they mourn not only for their afflictions, but for their sins, and for the sins they see around them; for on this day, Jesus mourned for our sins; on this day He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; and they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who are ashamed of themselves, and hate themselves, and humble themselves before God this day; for on this day Jesus humbled Himself for us; and they shall be exalted. Blessed are the forsaken and the despised.—Did not all men forsake Jesus this day,

in His hour of need? and why not thee, too, thou poor deserted one? Shall the disciple be above his Master? No; everyone that is perfect, must be like his master. The deeper, the bitterer your loneliness, the more are you like Him, who cried upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He knows what that grief, too, is like. He feels for thee, at least. Though all forsake thee, He is with thee still; and if He be with thee, what matter who has left thee for a while? Ay, blessed are those that weep now, for they shall laugh. It is those whom the Lord loveth that He chasteneth. And because He loves the poor, He brings them low. All things are blessed now, but sin; for all things, excepting sin, are redeemed by the life and death of the Son of God. Blessed are wisdom and courage, joy, and health, and beauty, love and marriage, childhood and manhood, corn and wine, fruits and flowers, for Christ redeemed them by His life. And blessed, too, are tears and shame, blessed are weakness and ugliness, blessed are agony and sickness, blessed the sad remembrance of our sins, and a broken heart, and a repentant spirit. Blessed is death, and blessed the unknown realms, where souls await the resurrection day, for Christ redeemed them by His death. Blessed are all things, weak, as well as strong. Blessed are all days, dark, as well as bright, for all are His, and He is ours; and all are ours, and we are His, for ever.

Therefore sigh on, ye sad ones, and rejoice in your own sadness; ache on, ye suffering ones, and rejoice in your own sorrows. Rejoice that you are made free of the holy brotherhood of mourners, that you may claim your place, too, if you will, among the noble army of martyrs. Rejoice that you are counted worthy of a fellowship in the sufferings of the Son of God. Rejoice and trust on, for after sorrow shall come joy.

Trust on; for in man's weakness God's strength shall be made perfect. Trust on, for death is the gate of life. Endure on to the end, and possess your souls in patience for a little while, and that, perhaps, a very little while. Death comes swiftly; and more swiftly still, perhaps, the day of the Lord. The deeper the sorrow, the nearer the salvation:

> The night is darkest before the dawn;
> When the pain is sorest the child is born;
> And the day of the Lord is at hand.

Ay, if the worst should come; if neither the laws of your country nor the benevolence of the righteous were strong enough to defend you; if one charitable plan after another were to fail; if the labour-market were getting fuller and fuller, and poverty were spreading wider and wider, and crime and misery were breeding faster and still faster every year than education and religion; all hope for the poor seemed gone and lost, and they were ready to believe the men who tell them that the land is over-peopled—that there are too many of us, too many industrious hands, too many cunning brains, too many immortal souls, too many of God's children upon God's earth, which God the Father made, and God the Son redeemed, and God the Holy Spirit teaches: then the Lord, the Prince of sufferers, He who knows your every grief, and weeps with you tear for tear, He would come out of His place to smite the haughty ones, and confound the cunning ones, and silence the loud ones, and empty the full ones; to judge with righteousness for the meek of the earth, to hearken to the prayer of the poor, whose heart he has been preparing, and to help the fatherless and needy to their right, that the man of the world may be no more exalted against them.

In that day men will find out a wonder and a miracle. They will see many that are first last, and

many that are last first. They will find that there were poor who were the richest after all; the simple who were wisest, and gentle who were bravest, and weak who were strongest; that God's ways are not as men's ways, nor God's thoughts as men's thoughts? Alas, who shall stand when God does this? At least He who will do it is Jesus, who loved us to the death; boundless love and gentleness, boundless generosity and pity; who was tempted even as we are, who has felt our every weakness. In that thought is utter comfort, that our Judge will be He who died and rose again, and is praying for us even now, to His Father and our Father. Therefore fear not, gentle souls, patient souls, pure consciences and tender hearts. Fear not, you who are empty and hungry, who walk in darkness and see no light; for though He fulfil once more, as He has again and again, the awful prophecy before the text; though He tread down the people in His anger, and make them drunk in His fury, and bring their strength to the earth; though kings with their armies may flee, and the stars which light the earth may fall, and there be great tribulation, wars, and rumours of wars, and on earth distress of nations with perplexity—yet it is when the day of His vengeance is at hand, that the year of His redeemed is come. And when they see all these things, let them rejoice and lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh.

Do you ask how I know this? Do you ask for a sign, for a token that these my words are true? I know that they are true. But, as for tokens, I will give you but this one, the sign of that bread and that wine. When the Lord shall have delivered His people out of all their sorrows, they shall eat of that bread and drink of that wine, one and all, in the kingdom of God.

VIII.

EASTER-DAY.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.—COLOSSIANS iii. 1.

I KNOW no better way of preaching to you the gospel of Easter, the good news which this day brings to all men, year after year, than by trying to explain to you the Epistle appointed for this day, which we have just read.

It begins, "If ye then be risen with Christ." Now that does not mean that St. Paul had any doubt whether the Colossians, to whom he was speaking, were risen with Christ or not. He does not mean, "I am not sure whether you are risen or not; but perhaps you are not; but if you are, you ought to do such and such things." He does not mean that. He was quite sure that these Colossians were risen with Christ. He had no doubt of it whatsoever. If you look at the chapter before, he says so. He tells them that they were buried with Christ in baptism, in which also they were risen with Christ, through faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead.

Now what reason had St. Paul to believe that these Colossians were risen with Jesus Christ? Because they had given up sin and were leading holy lives? That cannot be. The Epistle for this day says the very opposite. It does not say, "You are risen, because you have left off sinning." It says, "You must

leave off sinning, because you are risen." Was it then on account of any experiences, or inward feeling of theirs? Not at all. He says that these Colossians had been baptized, and that they had believed in God's work of raising Jesus Christ from the dead, and that therefore they were risen with Christ. In one word, they had believed the message of Easter-day, and therefore they shared in the blessings of Easter-day; as it is written in another place, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in thy heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Now these seem very wide words, too wide to please most people. But there are wider words still in St. Paul's epistles. He tells us again and again that God's mercy is a free gift; that He has made to us a free present of His Son Jesus Christ. That He has taken away the effect of all men's sin; and more than that, that men are God's children; that they have a right to believe that they are so, because they are so. For, He says, the free gift of Jesus Christ is not like Adam's offence. It is not less than it, narrower than it, as some folks say. It is not that by Adam's sin all became sinners, and by Jesus Christ's salvation an elect few out of them shall be made righteous. If you will think a moment, you will see that it cannot be so. For Jesus Christ conquered sin and death and the devil. But if, as some think, sin and death and the devil have destroyed and sent to hell by far the greater part of mankind, then they have conquered Christ, and not Christ them. Mankind belonged to Christ at first. Sin and death and the devil came in and ruined them, and then Christ came to redeem them; but if all that He has been able to do is to redeem one out of a thousand, or even nine out of ten, of them, then the

devil has had the best of the battle. He, and not Christ, is the conqueror. If a thief steals all the sheep on your farm, and all that you can get back from him is a part of the whole flock, which has had the best of it, you or the thief? If Christ's redemption is meant for only a few, or even a great many elect souls out of all the millions of mankind, which has had the best of it, Christ, the master of the sheep, or the devil, the robber and destroyer of them? Be sure, my friends, Christ is stronger than that; His love is deeper than that; His redemption is wider than that. How strong, how deep, how wide it is, we never shall know. St. Paul tells us that we never shall know, for it is boundless; but that we shall go on knowing more and more of its vastness for ever, finding it deeper, wider, loftier than our most glorious dreams could ever picture it. But this, he says, we do know, that we have gained more than Adam lost. For if by one man's offence many were made sinners, much more shall they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life by one even Jesus Christ. For, he says, where sin abounded, God's grace and free gift has much more abounded. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. Upon all men, you see. There can be no doubt about it. Upon you and me, and foreigners, and gipsies, and heathens, and thieves, and harlots—upon all mankind, let them be as bad or as good, as young or as old, as they may, the free gift of God has come to justification of life; they are justified, pardoned, and beloved in the sight of Almighty God; they have a right and a share to a new life; a different sort of life from what they are inclined to

lead, and do lead, by nature—to a life which death cannot take away, a life which may grow, and strengthen, and widen, and blossom, and bear fruit for ever and ever. They have a share in Christ's resurrection, in the blessing of Easter-day. They have a share in Christ, every one of them whether they claim that share or not. How far they will be punished for not claiming it, is a very different matter, of which we know nothing whatsoever. And how far the heathen who have never heard of Christ, or of their share in Him, will be punished, we know not—we are not meant to know. But we know that to their own Master they stand or fall, and that their Master is our Master too, and that He is a just Master, and requires little of him to whom He gives little; a just and merciful Master, who loved this sinful world enough to come down and die for it, while mankind were all rebels and sinners, and has gone on taking care of it, and improving it, in spite of all its sin and rebellion ever since, and that is enough for us.

St. Paul knew no more. It was a mystery, he says, a wonderful and unfathomable matter, which had been hidden since the foundation of the world, of which he himself says that he saw only through a glass darkly; and we cannot expect to have clearer eyes than he. But this he seems to have seen, that the Lord, when He rose again, bought a blessing even for the dumb beasts and the earth on which we live. For he says, the whole creation is now groaning in the pangs of labour, being about to bring forth something; and the whole creation will rise again; how, and when, and into what new state, we cannot tell. But St. Paul seems to say that when the Lord shall destroy death, the last of His enemies, then the whole creation shall

be renewed, and bring forth another earth, nobler and more beautiful than this one, free from death, and sin, and sorrow, and redeemed into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But this, on the other hand, St. Paul did see most clearly, and preached it to all to whom he spoke, that the ground and reason of this great and glorious mystery was the thing which happened on the first Easter-day, namely, the Lord Jesus rising from the dead. About that, at least, there was no doubt at all in his mind. We may see it by the Easter anthem, which we read this morning, taken out of the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians:

"Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Now he is not talking here merely of the rising again of our bodies at the last day. That was in his mind only the end, and outcome, and fruit, and perfecting, of men's rising from the dead in this life. For he tells these same Corinthians, and the Colossians, and others to whom he wrote, that life, the eternal life which would raise their bodies at the last day, was even then working in them.

Neither is he speaking only of a few believers. He says that, owing to the Lord's rising on this day, all shall be made alive—not merely all Christians, but all men. For he does not say, as in Adam all Christians die, but all men; and so he does not say, all Christians shall be made alive, but all men. For here, as in the sixth chapter of Romans, he is trying to make us understand the likeness between Adam and

Jesus Christ, whom he calls the new Adam. The first Adam, he says, was only a living soul, as the savages and heathens are; but the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the true pattern of men, is a quickening, life-giving spirit, to give eternal life to every human being who will accept His offer, and claim his share and right as a true man, after the likeness of the new Adam, Jesus Christ.

We then, every one of us who is here to-day, have a right to believe that we have a share in Christ's eternal life: that our original sin, that is, the sinfulness which we inherited from our forefathers, is all forgiven and forgotten, and that mankind is now redeemed, and belongs to the second Adam, the true and original head and pattern of man, Jesus Christ, in whom was no sin; and that because mankind belongs to him, God is well pleased with them, and reconciled to them, and looks on them not as a guilty, but as a pardoned and beloved race of beings.

And we have a right to believe also, that because all power is given to Christ in heaven and earth, there is given to Him the power of making men what they ought to be—like His own blessed, and glorious, and perfect self. Ask him, and you shall receive; knock at the gate of His treasure-house, and it shall be opened. Seek those things that are above, and you shall find them. You shall find old bad habits die out in you, new good habits spring up in you; old meannesses become weaker, new nobleness and manfulness become stronger; the old, selfish, covetous, savage, cunning, cowardly, brutal Adam dying out, the new, loving, brotherly, civilised, wise, brave, manful Adam growing up in you, day by day, to perfection, till you are changed from grace to grace, and glory to glory into the likeness of the Lord of men.

"These are great promises," you may say, "glorious promises; but what proof have you that they belong to us? They sound too good to be true; too great for such poor creatures as we are; give us but some proof that we have a right to them; give us but a pledge from Jesus Christ; give us but a sign, an assurance from God, and we may believe you then."

My friends, I am certain—and the longer I live I am the more certain—that there is no argument, no pledge, no sign, no assurance, like the bread and the wine upon that table. Assurances in our own hearts and souls are good, but we may be mistaken about them; for, after all, they are our own thoughts, notions in our own souls, these inward experiences and assurances; delightful and comforting as they are at times, yet we cannot trust them—we cannot trust our own hearts, they are deceitful above all things, who can know them? Yes: our own hearts may tell us lies; they may make us fancy that we are pleasing God, when we are doing the things most hateful to Him. They have made thousands fancy so already. They may make us fancy we are right in God's sight, when we are utterly wrong. They have made thousands fancy so already. These hearts of ours may make us fancy that we have spiritual life in us; that we are in a state higher and nobler than the sinners round us, when all the while our spirits are dead within us. They made the Pharisees of old fancy that their souls were alive, and pure, and religious, when they were dead and damned within them; and they may make us fancy so too. No: we cannot trust our hearts and inward feelings; but that bread, that wine, we can trust. Our inward feelings are a sign from man; that bread and wine are a sign from God. Our inward feelings may tell us what we feel

toward God: that bread, that wine, tell us something ten thousand times more important; they tell us what God feels towards us. And God must love us before we can love Him; God must pardon us before we can have mercy on ourselves; God must come to us, and take hold of us, before we can cling to Him; God must change us, before we can become right; God must give us eternal life in our hearts before we can feel and enjoy that new life in us. Then that bread, that wine, say that God has done all that for us already; they say: "God does love you; God has pardoned you; God has come to you; God is ready and willing to change and convert you; God has given you eternal life; and this love, this mercy, this coming to find you out while you are wandering in sin, this change, this eternal life, are all in His Son Jesus Christ; and that bread, that wine, are the signs of it. It is for the sake of Jesus' blood that God has pardoned you, and that cup is the new covenant in His blood. Come and drink, and claim your pardon. It is simply because Jesus Christ was man, and you, too, are men and women, wearing the flesh and blood which Christ wore; eating and drinking as Christ ate and drank, and not for any works or faith of your own, that God loves you, and has come to you, and called you into His family. This is the Gospel, the good news of Christ's free grace, and pardon, and salvation; and that bread, that wine, the common food of all men, not merely of the rich, or the wise, or the pious, but of saints and penitents, rich and poor. Christians and heathens, alike—that plain, common, every-day bread and wine—are the signs of it. Come and take the signs, and claim your share in God's love, in God's family. And it is in Jesus Christ, too, that you have eternal life. It is because you belong to Jesus Christ,

to mankind, of which He is the head and king, that God will change you, strengthen your soul to rise above your sins, raise you up daily more and more out of spiritual death, out of brutishness, and selfishness, and ignorance, and malice, into an eternal life of wisdom, and love, and courage, and mercifulness, and patience, and obedience; a life which shall continue through death, and beyond death, and raise you up again for ever at the last day, because you belong to Christ's body, and have been fed with Christ's eternal life. And that bread, that wine are the signs of it. "Take, eat," said Jesus, "this is my body; drink, this is my blood." Those are the signs that God has given you eternal life, and that this life is in His Son. What better sign would you have? There is no mistaking their message; they can tell you no lies. And they can, and will, bring your own Gospel-blessings to your mind, as nothing else can. They will make you feel, as nothing else can, that you are the beloved children of God, heirs of all that your King and Head has bought for you, when He died, and rose again upon this day. He gave you the Lord's Supper for a sign. Do you think that He did not know best what the best sign would be? He said: "Do this in remembrance of me." Do you think that He did not know better than you, and me, and all men, that if you did do it, it would put you in remembrance of Him?

Oh! come to His table, this day of all days in the year; and claim there your share in His body and His blood, to feed the everlasting life in you; which, though you see it not now, though you feel it not now, will surely, if you keep it alive in you by daily faith, and daily repentance, and daily prayer, and daily obedience, raise you up, body and soul, to reign with Him for ever at the last day.

IX.

THE COMFORTER.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.—JOHN xvi. 7.

WE are now coming near to two great days, Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday, which our forefathers have appointed, year by year, to put us continually in mind of two great works, which the Lord worked out for us, His most unworthy subjects, and still unworthier brothers.

On Ascension-day He ascended up into Heaven, and received gifts for men, even for His enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them; and on Whit-Sunday, He sent down those gifts. The Spirit of God came down to dwell in the hearts of men, to be the right of everyone who asks for it, white or black, young or old, rich or poor, and never to leave this earth as long as there is a human being on it. And because we are coming near to these two great days, the Prayer-book, in the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, tries to put us in mind of those days, and to make us ready to ask for the blessings of which they are the yearly signs and witnesses. The Gospel for last Sunday told us how the Lord told His disciples just before His death, that for a little while they should not see Him; and again a little while and they should

see Him, because he was going to the Father, and that they should have great sorrow, but that their sorrow should be turned into joy. And the Gospel for to-day goes further still, and tells us why He was going away —that He might send to them the Comforter, His Holy Spirit, and that it was expedient—good for them, that He should go away; for that if He did not, the Comforter would not come to them. Now, in these words, I do not doubt He was speaking of Ascension-day, and of Whit-Sunday; and therefore it is that these Gospels have been chosen to be read before Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday; and in proportion as we attend to these Gospels, and take in the meaning of them, and act accordingly, Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday will be a blessing and a profit to us; and in proportion as we neglect them, or forget them, Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday will be witnesses against our souls at the day of judgment, that the Lord Himself condescended to buy for us with His own blood, blessings unspeakable, and offer them freely unto us, in spite of all our sins, and yet we would have none of them, but preferred our own will to God's will, and the little which we thought we could get for ourselves, to the unspeakable treasures which God had promised to give us, and turned away from the blessings of His kingdom, to our own foolish pleasure and covetousness, like "the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

I said that God had promised to us an unspeakable treasure: and so He has; a treasure that will make the poorest and weakest man among us, richer than if he had all the wealth gathered from all the nations of the world, which everyone is admiring now in that Great Exhibition in London, and stronger than if he had all the wisdom which produced that

wealth. Let us see now what it is that God has promised us—and then those to whom God has given ears to hear, and hearts to understand, will see that large as my words may sound, they are no larger than the truth.

Christ said, that if He went away, He would send down the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God. The Nicene Creed says, that the Holy Spirit of God is the Lord and Giver of life; and so He is. He gives life to the earth, to the trees, to the flowers, to the dumb animals, to the bodies and minds of men; all life, all growth, all health, all strength, all beauty, all order, all help and assistance of one thing by another, which you see in the world around you, comes from Him. He is the Lord and Giver of life; in Him, the earth, the sun and stars, all live and move and have their being. He is not them, or a part of them, but He gives life to them. But to men He is more than that —for we men ourselves are more than that, and need more. We have immortal spirits in us—a reason, a conscience, and a will; strange rights and duties, strange hopes and fears, of which the beasts and the plants know nothing. We have hearts in us which can love, and feel, and sorrow, and be weak, and sinful, and mistaken; and therefore we want a Comforter. And the Lord and Giver of life has promised to be our Comforter; and the Father and the Son, from both of whom He proceeds, have promised to send Him to us, to strengthen and comfort us, and give our spirits life and health, and knit us together to each other, and to God, in one common bond of love and fellow-feeling even as He the Spirit knits together the Father and the Son.

I said that we want a Comforter. If we consider what that word Comforter means, we shall see that

we do want a Comforter, and that the only Comforter which can satisfy us for ever and ever, must be He, the very Spirit of God, the Lord and Giver of life.

Now Comforter means one who gives comfort; so the meaning of it will depend upon what comfort means. Our word comfort, comes from two old Latin words, which mean *with* and *to strengthen*. And, therefore, a Comforter means anyone who is with us to strengthen us, and do for us what we could not do for ourselves. You will see that this is the proper meaning of the word, when you remember what bodily things we call comforts. You say that a person is comfortable, or lives in comfort, if he has a comfortable income, a comfortable house, comfortable clothes, comfortable food, and so on. Now all these things, his money, his house, his clothes, his food, are not himself. They make him stronger and more at ease. They make his life more pleasant to him. But they are not *him;* they are round him, with him, to strengthen him. So with a person's mind and feelings; when a man is in sorrow and trouble, he cannot comfort himself. His friends must come to him and comfort him; talk to him, advise him, show their kind feeling towards him, and in short, be with him to strengthen him in his afflictions. And if we require comfort for our bodies, and for our minds, my friends, how much more do we for our spirits—our souls, as we call them! How weak, and ignorant, and self-willed, and perplexed, and sinful they are—surely our souls require a comforter far more than our bodies or our minds do! And to comfort our spirits, we require a spirit; for we cannot see our own spirits, our own souls, as we can our bodies. We cannot even tell by our feelings what state they are in. We may deceive ourselves, and we do deceive ourselves, again and

again, and fancy that our souls are strong when they are weak—that they are simple and truthful when they are full of deceit and falsehood—that they are loving God when they are only loving themselves—that they are doing God's will when they are only doing their own selfish and perverse wills. No man can take care of his own spirit, much less give his own spirit life; "no man can quicken his own soul," says David, that is, no man can give his own soul life. And therefore we must have someone beyond ourselves to give life to our spirits. We must have someone to teach us the things that we could never find out for ourselves, someone who will put into our hearts the good desires that could never come of themselves. We must have someone who can change these wills of ours, and make them love what they hate by nature, and make them hate what they love by nature. For by nature we are selfish. By nature we are inclined to love ourselves, rather than anyone else; to take care of ourselves, rather than anyone else. By nature we are inclined to follow our own will, rather than God's will, to do our own pleasure, rather than follow God's commandments, and therefore by nature our spirits are dead; for selfishness and self-will are *spiritual death*. Spiritual life is love, pity, patience, courage, honesty, truth, justice, humbleness, industry, self-sacrifice, obedience to God, and therefore to those whom God sends to teach and guide us. *That* is spiritual life. That is the life of Jesus Christ; His character, His conduct, was like that—to love, to help, to pity, all around—to give up Himself even to death—to do His Father's will and not His own. That was His life. Because He was the Son of God He did it. In proportion as we live like Him, we shall be living like sons of God. In proportion as we live like Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, our spirits will be alive. For he that hath Jesus Christ the Son of God in him, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life, says St. John. But who can raise us from the death of sin and selfishness, to the life of righteousness and love? Who can change us into the likeness of Jesus Christ? Who can even show us what Jesus Christ's likeness is, and take the things of Christ and show them to us; so that by seeing what He was, we may see what we should be? And who, if we have this life in us, will keep it alive in us, and be with us to strengthen us? Who will give us strength to force the foul and fierce and false thoughts out of our mind, and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan?" Who will give our spirits life? and who will strengthen that life in us?

Can we do it for ourselves? Oh! my friends, I pity the man who is so blind and ignorant, who knows so little of himself, upon whom the lessons which his own mistakes, and sins, and failings should have taught him, have been so wasted that he fancies that he can teach and guide himself without any help, and that he can raise his own soul to life, or keep it alive without assistance. Can his body do without its comforts? Then how can his spirit? If he left his house, and threw away his clothes, and refused all help from his fellow-men, and went and lived in the woods like a wild beast, we should call him a madman, because he refused the help and comfort to his body which God has made necessary for him. But just as great a madman is he who refuses the help and the strengthening which God has made necessary for his spirit—just as great a madman is he who fancies that his soul is any more able than his body is, to live without continual help. It is just because man is nobler

than the beast that he requires help. The fox in the wood needs no house, no fire; he needs no friends; he needs no comforts, and no comforters, because he is a beast—because he is meant to live and die selfish and alone; therefore God has provided him in himself with all things necessary to keep the poor brute's selfish life in him for a few short years. But just because man is nobler than that; just because man is not intended to live selfish and alone; just because his body, and his mind, and his spirit are beautifully and delicately made, and intended for all sorts of wonderful purposes, therefore God has appointed that from the moment he is born to all eternity he cannot live alone; he cannot support himself; he stands in continual need of the assistance of all around him, for body, and soul, and spirit; he needs clothes, which other men must make; houses, which other men must build; food, which other men must produce; he has to get his livelihood by working for others, while others get their livelihood in return by working for him. As a child he needs his parents to be his comforters, to take care of him in body and mind. As he grows up he needs the care of others; he cannot exist a day without his fellow-men: he requires schoolmasters to educate him; books and masters to teach him his trade; and when he has learnt it, and settled himself in life, he requires laws made by other men, perhaps by men who died hundreds of years before he was born, to secure to him his rights and property, to secure to him comforts, and to make him feel comfortable in his station; he needs friends and family to comfort him in sorrow and in joy, to do for him the thousand things which he cannot do for himself. In proportion as he is alone and friendless he is pitiable and miserable, let him be as rich as Solomon himself.

From the moment, I say, he is born, he needs continual comforts and comforters for his body, and mind, and heart. And then he fancies that, though his body and his mind cannot exist safely, or grow up healthily, without the continual care and comforting of his fellow-men, that yet his *soul*, the part of him which is at once the most important and the most in danger; the part of him of which he knows least; the part of him which he understands least; the part of him of which his body and mind cannot take care, because it has to take care of them, can live, and grow, and prosper without any help whatsoever!

And if we cannot strengthen our own souls no man can strengthen them for us. No man can raise our bodies to life, much less can he raise our souls. The physician himself cannot cure the sicknesses of our bodies; he can only give us fit medicines, and leave them to cure us by certain laws of nature, which he did not make, and which he cannot alter. And though the physician can, by much learning, understand men's bodies somewhat, who can understand men's souls? We cannot understand our own souls; we do not know what they are, how they live; whence they come, or whither they go. We cannot cure them ourselves, much less can anyone cure them for us. The only one who can cure our souls is He that made our souls; the only one who can give life to our souls is He who gives life to everything. The only one who can cure, and strengthen, and comfort our spirits, is He who understands our spirits, because He himself is the Spirit of all spirits, the Spirit who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God; because He is the Spirit of God the Father, who made all heaven and earth, and of Jesus Christ the Son, who understands the heart of man, who can be touched with the feelings of

our infirmities, and hath been tempted in all things, just as we are, yet without sin.

He is the Comforter which God has promised to our spirits, the only Comforter who can strengthen our spirits; and if we have Him with us, if He is strengthening us, if He is leading us, if He is abiding with us, if He is changing us day by day, more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ, are we not, as I said at the beginning of my sermon, richer than if we possessed all the land of England, stronger than if we had all the armies of the world at our command? For what is more precious than — God Himself? What is stronger than—God Himself? The poorest man in whom God's Spirit dwells is greater than the greatest king in whom God's Spirit does not dwell. And so he will find in the day that he dies. Then where will riches be, and power? The rich man will take none of them away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him. Naked came he into this world, and naked shall he return out of it, to go as he came, and carry with him none of the comforts which he thought in this life the only ones worth having. But the Spirit of God remains with us for ever; that treasure a man shall carry out of this world with him, and keep to all eternity. That friend will never forsake him, for He is the Spirit of Love, which abideth for ever. That Comforter will never grow weak, for He is Himself The very eternal Lord and Giver of Life; and the soul that is possessed by Him must live, must grow, must become nobler, purer, freer, stronger, more loving, for ever and ever, as the eternities roll by. That is what He will give you, my friends; that is His treasure; that is the Spirit-life, the true and everlasting life, which flows from Him as the stream flows from the fountain-head.

X.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—against such there is no law.—GALATIANS v. 22, 23..

IN all countries, and in all ages, the world has been full of complaints of Law and Government. And one hears the same complaints in England now. You hear complaints that the laws favour one party and one rank more than another, that they are expensive, and harsh, and unfair, and what not?—But I think, my friends, that for us, and especially on this Whit-Sunday, it will be much wiser, instead of complaining of the laws, to complain of ourselves, for needing those laws. For what is it that makes laws necessary at all, except man's sinfulness? Adam required no laws in the garden of Eden. We should require no laws if we were what we ought to be—what God has offered to make us. We may see this by looking at the laws themselves, and considering the purposes for which they were made. We shall then see, that, like Moses' Laws of old, the greater part of them have been added because of transgressions.—In plain English—to prevent men from doing things which they ought not to do, and which, if they were in a right state of mind, they would not do. How many laws are passed, simply to prevent one man, or one class, from oppressing or ill-using some other man or class? What a vast number

of them are passed simply to protect property, or to protect the weak from the cruel, the ignorant from the cunning! It is plain that if there was no cruelty, no cunning, no dishonesty, these laws, at all events, would not be needed. Again, one of the great complaints against the laws and the government, is that they are so expensive, that rates and taxes are heavy burdens—and doubtless they are: but what makes them necessary except men's sin? If the poor were more justly and mercifully treated, and if they in their turn were more thrifty and provident, there would be no need of the expenses of poor rates. If there was no love of war and plunder, there would be no need of the expense of an army. If there was no crime, there would be no need of the expense of police and prisons. The thing is so simple and self-evident, that it seems almost childish to mention it. And yet, my friends, we forget it daily. We complain of the laws and their harshness, of taxes and their expensiveness, and we forget all the while that it is our own selfishness and sinfulness which brings this expense upon us, which makes it necessary for the law to interfere and protect us against others, and others against us. And while we are complaining of the government for not doing its work somewhat more cheaply, we are forgetting that if we chose, we might leave government very little work to do—that every man if he chose, might be his own law-maker and his own police—that every man if he will, may lead a life "against which there is no law."

I say again, that it is our own fault, the fault of our sinfulness, that laws are necessary for us. In proportion as we are what Scripture calls "natural men," that is, savage, selfish, divided from each other, and struggling against each other, each for his own interest; as long as we are not renewed and changed into new

men, so long will laws, heavy, severe, and burdensome, be necessary for us. Without them we should be torments to ourselves, to our neighbours, to our country. But these laws are only necessary as long as we are full of selfishness and ungodliness. The moment we yield ourselves up to God's law, man's laws are ready enough to leave us alone. Take, for instance, a common example; as long as anyone is a faithful husband and a good father, the law does not interfere with his conduct towards his wife and children. But it is when he is unfaithful to them, when he ill-treats them, or deserts them, that the law interferes with its "Thou shalt not," and compels him to behave, against his will, in the way in which he ought to have behaved of his own will. It was free to the man to have done his duty by his family, without the law—the moment he neglects his duty, he becomes amenable to it.

But the law can only force a man's actions: it cannot change his heart. In the instance which I have been just mentioning, the law can say to a man, "You shall not ill-treat your family; you shall not leave them to starve." But the law cannot say to him "You shall love your family." The law can only command from a man outward obedience; the obedience of the heart it cannot enforce. The law may make a man do his duty, it cannot make a man *love* his duty. And therefore laws will never set the world right. They can punish persons after the wrong is done, and that not certainly nor always: but they cannot certainly prevent the wrongs being done. The law can punish a man for stealing: and yet, as we see daily, men steal in the face of punishment. Or even if the law, by its severity, makes persons afraid to commit certain particular crimes, yet still as long as the sinful heart is left in them unchanged, the sin which is checked in one

direction is sure to break out in another. Sin, like every other disease, is sure, when it is driven onwards, to break out at a fresh point, or fester within some still more deadly, because more hidden and unsuspected, shape. The man who dare not be an open sinner for fear of the law, can be a hypocrite in spite of it. The man who dare not steal for fear of the law, can cheat in spite of it. The selfish man will find fresh ways of being selfish, the tyrannical man of being tyrannical, however closely the law may watch him. He will discover some means of evading it; and thus the law, after all, though it may keep down crime, multiplies sin; and by the law, as St. Paul says, is the knowledge of sin.

What then will do that for this poor world which the law cannot do—which, as St. Paul tells us, not even the law of God given on Mount Sinai, holy, just, good as it was, could do, because no law can give life? What will give men a new heart and a new spirit, which shall love its duty and do it willingly, and not by compulsion, everywhere and always, and not merely just as far as it commanded? The text tells us that there is a Spirit, the fruit of which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; a character such as no laws can give to a man, and which no law dare punish in a man. Look at this character as St. Paul sets it forth—and then think what need would there be of all these burdensome and expensive laws, if all men were but full of the fruits of that Spirit which St. Paul describes?

I know what answer will be ready, in some of your minds at least, to all this. You will be ready to reply, almost angrily, "Of course if everyone was perfect, we should need no laws: but people are not perfect, and you cannot expect them to be." My friends,

whether or not *we* expect baptized people, living in a Christian country, to be perfect, God expects them to be perfect; for He has said, by the mouth of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "Be ye therefore perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." And He has told us what being perfect is like; you may read it for yourselves in His sermon on the Mount; and you may see also that what He commands us to do in that sermon, from the beginning to the end, is the exact opposite and contrary of the ways and rules of this world, which, as I have shown, make burdensome laws necesary to prevent our devouring each other. Now, do you think that God would have told us to be perfect, if He knew that it was impossible for us? Do you think that He, the God of truth, would have spoken such a cruel mockery against poor sinful creatures like us, as to command us a duty without giving us the means of fulfilling it? Do you think that He did not know ten thousand times better than I what I have been just telling you, that laws could not change men's hearts and wills; that commanding a man to love and like a thing will not make him love and like it; that a man's heart and spirit must be changed in him from within, and not merely laws and commandments laid on him from without? Then why has He commanded us to love each other, ay, to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, to pray for those who use us spitefully? Do you think the Lord meant to make hypocrites of us; to tell us to go about, as some who call themselves religious do go about, with their lips full of meek, and humble, and simple, and loving words, while their hearts are full of pride, and spite, and cunning, and hate, and selfishness, which are all the more deadly for being kept in and plastered over by a smooth outside? God forbid! He tells us

to love each other, only because He has promised us the spirit of love. He tells us to be humble, because He can make us humble-hearted. He tells us to be honest, because He can make us love and delight in honesty. He tells us to refrain ourselves from foul thoughts as well as from foul actions, because He can take the foul heart out of us, and give us instead the spirit of purity and holiness. He tells us to lead new lives after the new pattern of Himself, because He can give us new hearts and a new spring of life within us; in short, He bids us behave as sons of God should behave, because, as He said Himself, "If we, being evil, know how to give our children what is good for them, much more will our heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to those who ask him." If you would be perfect, ask your Father in heaven to make you perfect. If you feel that your heart is wrong, ask Him to give you a new and a right heart. If you feel yourselves—as you are, whether you feel it or not—too weak, too ignorant, too selfish, to guide yourselves, ask Him to send His Spirit to guide you; ask for the Spirit from which comes all love, all light, all wisdom, all strength of mind. Ask for that Spirit, and you *shall* receive it; seek for it, and you shall find it; knock at the gate of your Father's treasure-house, and it shall be surely opened to you.

But some of you, perhaps, are saying to yourselves, "How will my being changed and renewed by the Spirit of God, render the laws less burdensome, while the crime and sin around me remain unchanged? It is others who want to be improved as much, and perhaps more than I do." It may be so, my friends; or, again, it may not; those who fancy that others need God's Spirit more than they do, may be the very persons who need it really the most; those who say

they see, may be only proving their blindness by so saying; those who fancy that their souls are rich, and are full of all knowledge, and understand the whole Bible, and want no further teaching, may be, as they were in St. John's time, just the ones who are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked in soul, and do not know it. But at all events, if you think others need to be changed by God's Spirit, *pray* that God's Spirit may change them. For believe me, unless you pray for God's Spirit for each other, ay, for the whole world, there is no use asking for yourselves. This, I believe, is one of the reasons, perhaps the chief reason, why the fruits of God's Spirit are so little seen among us in these days; why our Christianity is become more and more dead, and hollow, and barren, while expensive and intricate laws and taxes are becoming more and more necessary every year; because our religion has become so selfish, because we have been praying for God's Spirit too little for each other. Our prayers have become too selfish. We have been looking for God's Spirit not so much as a means to enable us to do good to others, but as some sort of mysterious charm which was to keep us ourselves from the punishment of our sins in the next life, or give us a higher place in heaven; and, therefore, St. James's words have been fulfilled to us, even in our very prayers for God's Spirit, "Ye ask and have not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts" —to save our selfish souls from the pains of hell; to give our selfish souls selfish pleasures and selfish glorification in the world to come: but not to spread God's kingdom upon earth, not to make us live on earth such lives as Christ lived; a life of love and self-sacrifice, and continual labour for the souls of others. Therefore it is, that God's Spirit is not poured out

upon us in these days; for God's Spirit is the spirit of love and brotherhood, which delivers a man from his selfishness; and if we do not desire to be delivered from our selfishness, we do not desire the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God will not be bestowed upon us. And no man desires to be delivered from his own selfishness, who in his very prayers, when he ought to be thinking least about himself alone, is thinking about himself most of all, and forgetting that he is the member of a family—that all mankind are his brethren—that he can claim nothing for himself to which every sinner around him has an equal right—that nothing is necessary for him, which is not equally necessary for everyone around him; that he has all the world besides himself to pray for, and that his prayers for himself will be heard only according as he prays for all the world beside. Baptism teaches us this, when it tells us that our old selfish nature is to be washed away, and a new character, after the pattern of Christ, is to live and grow up in us; that from the day we are baptized, to the day of our death, we should live not for ourselves, but for Jesus, in whom was no selfishness; when it teaches us that we are not only children of God, but members of Christ's Family, and heirs of God's kingdom, and therefore bound to make common cause with all other members of that Family, to live and labour for the common good of all our fellow-citizens in that kingdom. The Lord's prayer teaches us this, when He tells us to pray, not "My Father," but "Our Father;" not "my soul be saved," but "Thy kingdom come;" not "give *me*," but "give *us* our daily bread;" not "forgive *me*," but "forgive *us* our trespasses," and that only as we forgive others; not "lead *me* not," but "lead *us* not into temptation;" not "deliver *me*," but "deliver *us*

from evil." After *that* manner the Lord told us to pray; and, in proportion as we pray in that manner, asking for nothing for ourselves which we do not ask for everyone else in the whole world, just so far and no farther will God *hear* our prayers. He who asks for God's Spirit for himself only, and forgets that all the world need it as much as he, is not asking for God's Spirit at all, and does not know even what God's Spirit is. The mystery of Pentecost, too, which came to pass on this day 1818 years ago, teaches us the same thing also. Those cloven tongues of fire, the tokens of God's Spirit, fell not upon one man, but upon many; not when they were apart from each other, but when they were together; and what were the fruits of that Spirit in the Apostles? Did they remain within that upper room, each priding himself upon his own gifts, and trying merely to gain heaven for his own soul? If they had any such fancies, as they very likely had before the Spirit fell upon them, they had none such afterwards. The Spirit must have taken all such thoughts from them, and given them a new notion of what it was to be devout and holy: for instead of staying in that upper room, they went forth instantly into the public place to preach in foreign tongues to all the people. Instead of keeping themselves apart from each other in silence, and fancying, as some have done, and some do now, that they pleased God by being solitary, and melancholy, and selfish—what do we read? the fruit of God's Spirit was in them; that they and the three thousand souls who were added to them, on the first day of their preaching, "were all together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions, and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need, and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking

bread from house to house, did eat their bread in gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people." Those were the fruits of God's Spirit in *them*. Till we see more of that sort of life and society in England, we shall not be able to pride ourselves on having much of God's Spirit among us.

But above all, if anything will teach us that the strength of God's Spirit is not a strength which we must ask for for ourselves alone; that the blessings of God's kingdom are blessings which we cannot have in order to keep them to ourselves, but can only enjoy in as far as we share them with those around us; if anything, I say, ought to teach us that lesson, it is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Just consider a moment, my friends, what a strange thing it is, if we will think of it, that the Lord's Supper, the most solemn and sacred thing with which a man can have to do upon earth, is just a thing which he cannot transact for himself, or by himself. Not alone in secret, in his chamber, but, whether he will or not, in the company of others, not merely in the company of his own private friends, but in the company of any or everyone, rich or poor, who chooses to kneel beside him; he goes with others, rich and poor alike, to the Lord's Table, and there the same bread, and the same wine, is shared among all by the same priest. If that means anything, it means this—that rich and poor alike draw life for their souls from the same well, not for themselves only, not apart from each other, but all in common, all together, because they are brothers, members of one family, as the leaves are members of the same tree; that as the same bread and the same wine are needed to nourish the bodies of all, the same spirit of God is needed to nourish the souls of all; and that we cannot have this spirit, except as members

of a body, any more than a man's limb can have life when it is cut off and parted from him. This is the reason, and the only reason, why Protestant clergymen are forbidden, thank God! to give the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to any one person singly. If a clergyman were to administer the Lord's Supper, to himself in private, without any congregation to partake with him, it would not be the Lord's Supper, it would be nothing, and worse than nothing; it would be a sham and a mockery, and, I believe, a sin. I do not believe that Christ would be present, that God's Spirit would rest on that man. For our Lord says, that it is where two or three are gathered together in His name, that He is in the midst of them. And it was at a supper, at a feast, where all the Apostles were met together, that our Lord divided the bread amongst them, and told them to share the cup amongst themselves, just as a sign that they were all members of one body—that the welfare of each of them was bound up in the welfare of all the rest—that God's blessing did not rest upon each singly, but upon all together. And it is just because we have forgotten this, my friends—because we have forgotten that we are all brothers and sisters, children of one family, members of one body—because, in short, we have carried our selfishness into our very religion, and up to the altar of God, that we neglect the Lord's Supper as we do. People neglect the Lord's Supper because they either do not know or do not like that, of which the Lord's Supper is the token and warrant. It is not merely that they feel themselves unfit for the Lord's Supper, because they are not in love and charity with all men. Oh! my dear friends, do not some of your hearts tell you, that the reason why you stay away from the Lord's Supper is because you do not *wish* to be fit for the Lord's Supper—because you

do not like to be in love and charity with all men—because you do not wish to be reminded that you are equals in God's sight, all equally sinful, all equally pardoned—and to see people whom you dislike or despise, kneeling by your side, and partaking of the same bread and wine with you, as a token that God sees no difference between you and them; that God looks upon you all as brothers, however little brotherly love or fellow-feeling there may be, alas! between you? Or, again, do not some of you stay away from the Lord's Supper, because you see no good in going? because it seems to make those who go no better than they were before? Shall I tell you the reason of that? Shall I tell you why, as is too true, too many do come to the Lord's Supper, and so far from being the better for it, seem only the worse? Because they come to it in selfishness. We have fallen into the same false and unscriptural way of looking at the Lord's Supper, into which the Papists have. People go to the Lord's Supper nowadays too much to get some private good for their own souls, and it would not matter to many of them, I am afraid, if not another person in the parish received it, provided they can get, as they fancy, the same blessing from it. Thus they come to it in an utterly false and wrong temper of mind. Instead of coming as members of Christ's body, to get from Him life and strength, to work, in their places, as members of that body, they come to get something for themselves, as if there was nobody else's soul in the world to be saved but their own. Instead of coming to ask for the Spirit of God to deliver them from their selfishness, and make them care less about themselves, and more about all around them, they come to ask for the Spirit of God because they think it will make themselves higher and happier in heaven. And of

course they do not get what they come for, because they come for the wrong thing. Thus those who see them, begin to fancy that the Lord's Supper is not, after all, so very important for the salvation of their souls; and not finding in the Bible actually written these words, "Thou shalt perish everlastingly unless thou take the Lord's Supper," they end by staying away from it, and utterly neglecting it, they and their children after them; preferring their own selfishness, to God's Spirit of love, and saying, like Esau of old, "I am hungry, and I must live. I must get on in this selfish world by following its selfish ways; what is the use of a spirit of love and brotherhood to me? If I were to obey the Gospel, and sacrifice my own interest for those around me, I should starve; what good will my birthright do me?

Oh! my friends, I pray God that some of you, at least, may change your mind. I pray God that some of you may see at last, that all the misery and the burdens of this time, spring from one root, which is selfishness; and that the reason why we are selfish, is because we have not with us the Spirit of God, which is the spirit of brotherhood and love. Let us pray God now, and henceforth, to take that selfishness out of all our hearts. Let us pray God now, and henceforth, to pour upon us, and upon all our countrymen, ay, and upon the whole world, the spirit of friendship and fellow-feeling, the spirit which when men have among them, they need no laws to keep them from supplanting, and oppressing, and devouring each other, because its fruits are love, cheerfulness, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, honesty, meekness, temperance. Then there will be no need, my friends, for me to call you to the Supper of the Lord. You will no more think of staying away from it, than the Apostles did, when the Spirit was poured out on them.

For what do we read that they did after the first Whit-Sunday? That altogether with one accord, they broke bread daily; that is, partook of the Lord's Supper every day, from house to house. They did not need to be told to do it. They did it, as I may say, by instinct. There was no question or argument about it in their minds. They had found out that they were all brothers, with one common cause in joy and sorrow—that they were all members of one body—that the life of their souls came from one root and spring, from one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the light and the life of men, in whom they were all one, members of each other; and therefore, they delighted in that Lord's Supper, just because it brought them together; just because it was a sign and a token to them that they did belong to each other, that they had one Lord, one faith, one interest, one common cause for this life, and for all eternity. And therefore the blessing of that Lord's Supper did come to them, and in it they did receive strength to live like children of God and members of Christ, and brothers to each other and to all mankind. They proved by their actions what that Communion Feast, that Sacrament of Brotherhood, had done for them. They proved it by not counting their own lives dear to them, but going forth in the face of poverty and persecution, and death itself, to preach to the whole world the good news that Christ was their King. They proved it by their conduct to each other when they had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need. They proved it by needing no laws to bind them to each other from without, because they were bound to each other from within, by the love which comes down from God, and is the very bond of peace, and of every virtue which becomes a man.

XI.

ASCENSION-DAY.

And Jesus led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem, with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.—LUKE xxiv. 50-53.

ON this day it is fit and proper for us—if we have understood, and enjoyed, and profited by the wonder of the Lord's Ascension into Heaven—to be in the same state of mind as the Apostles were after His Ascension: for what was right for them is right for us and for all men; the same effects which it produced on them it ought to produce on us. And we may know whether we are in the state in which Christian men ought to be, by seeing how far we are in the same state of mind as the Apostles were. Now the text tells us in what state of mind they were; how that, after the Lord Jesus was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven, they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem, with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. It seems at first sight certainly very strange that they should go back with great joy. They had just lost their Teacher, their Master—One who had been more to them than all friends and fathers could be; One who had taken them, poor simple fishermen, and changed the whole course of their lives, and taught them things which He had taught to no one else, and given them a great and

awful work to do—the work of changing the ways and thoughts and doings of the whole world. He had sent them out—eleven unlettered working men—to fight against the sin and the misery of the whole world. And He had given them open warning of what they were to expect; that by it they should win neither credit, nor riches, nor ease, nor anything else that the world thinks worth having. He gave them fair warning that the world would hate them, and try to crush them. He told them, as the Gospel for to-day says, that they should be driven out of the churches; that the religious people, as well as the irreligious, would be against them; that the time would come when those who killed them would think that they did God service; that nothing but labour, and want, and persecution, and slander, and torture, and death was before them—and now He had gone away and left them. He had vanished up into the empty air. They were to see His face, and hear His voice no more. They were to have no more of His advice, no more of His teaching, no more of His tender comfortings; they were to be alone in the world—eleven poor working men, with the whole world against them, and so great a business to do that they would not have time to get their bread by the labour of their hands. Is it not wonderful that they did not sit down in despair, and say, "What will become of us?" Is it not wonderful that they did not give themselves up to grief at losing the Teacher who was worth all the rest of the world put together? Is it not wonderful that they did not go back, each one to his old trade, to his fishing and to his daily labour, saying, "At all events we must eat; at all events we must get our livelihood;" and end, as they had begun, in being mere labouring men, of whom the world would never have

heard a word? And instead of that we read that they went back with great joy not to their homes but to Jerusalem, the capital city of their country, and "were continually in the temple blessing and praising God." Well, my friends, and if it is possible for one man to judge what another man would have done—if it is possible to guess what we should have done in their case—common-sense must show us this, that if He was merely their Teacher, they would have either given themselves up to despair, or gone back, some to their plough, some to their fishing-nets, and some, like Matthew, to their counting-houses, and we should never have heard a word of them. But if you will look in your Bibles, you will find that they thought Him much more than a teacher—that they thought Him to be the Lord and King of the whole world; and you will find that the great joy with which the disciples went back, after He ascended into heaven, came from certain very strange words that He had been speaking to them just before He ascended—words about which they could have but two opinions: either they must have thought that they were utter falsehood, and self-conceit, and blasphemy; and that Jesus, who had been all along speaking to them such words of wisdom and holiness as never man spake before, had suddenly changed His whole character at the last, and become such a sort of person as it is neither fit for me to speak of, or you to hear me speak of, in God's church, and in Jesus Christ's hearing, even though it be merely for the sake of argument; or else they must have thought *this* about His words, that they were the most joyful and blessed words that ever had been spoken on the earth; that they were the best of all news; the most complete of all Gospels for this poor sinful world; that what Jesus had said about Himself was true; and that as long as

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it was true, it did not matter in the least what became of them; it did not matter in the least what difficulties stood in their way, for they would be certain to conquer them all; it did not matter in the least how men might persecute and slander them, for they would be sure to get their reward; it did not matter in the least how miserable and sinful the world might be just then, for it was certain to be changed, and converted, and brought to God, to righteousness, to love, to freedom, to light, at last.

If you look at the various accounts, in the four gospels, of the Lord's last words on earth, you will see, surely, what I mean. Let us take them one by one.

St. Matthew tells us that, a few days before the Lord's ascension, He met His disciples on a mountain in Galilee, where he had appointed them to await him; and there told them, that all power was given to Him in heaven and earth. Was not that blessed news—was not that a gospel? That all the power in heaven and earth belonged to *Him?* To Him, who had all His life been doing good? To Him, in whom there had never been one single stain of tyranny or selfishness? To Him, who had been the friend of publicans and sinners? To Him, who had rebuked the very richest, and loved the very poorest? To him, who had shown that He had both the power and the will to heal every kind of sickness and disease? To Him, who had conquered and driven out, wherever He met them, all the evil spirits which enslave and torment poor sinful men? To Him, who had shown by rising from the dead, that He was stronger than even death itself? To Him, who had declared that He was the Son of God the Father, that the great God who had made heaven and earth, and all therein, was perfectly pleased and satisfied with Him, that He was come to do His Father's will, and not His

own; that He was the ancient Lord of the earth, the I AM who was before Abraham? And He was now to have all power in heaven and earth! Everything which was done right in the world henceforth, was to be His doing. The kingdom and rule over the whole universe, was to be His. So He said; and His disciples believed Him; and if they believed Him, how could they but rejoice? How could they but rejoice at the glorious thought that He, the son of the village maiden, the champion of the poor and the suffering, was to have the government of the world for ever? That He, who all the while He had been on earth had showed that He was perfect justice, perfect love, perfect humanity, was to reign till He had put all His enemies under His feet? How could the world but prosper under such a King as that? How could wickedness triumph, while He, the perfectly righteous one, was King? How could misery triumph, while He, the perfectly merciful one, was King? How could ignorance triumph, while He, the perfectly wise one, who had declared that God the Father hid nothing from Him, was King? Unless the disciples had been more dull and selfish than the dumb beasts around them, what could they do but rejoice at that news? What matter to them if Jesus were taken out of their sight, as long as all power was given to Him in heaven and earth?

But He had told them more. He had told them that they were not to keep this glorious secret to themselves. No: they were to go forth and preach the gospel of it, the good news of it, to every creature—to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. The good news that God was the King of men, after all; that cruel tyrants and oppressors, and conquerors, were not their kings; that neither the storms over their heads, nor the earth under their feet, nor the clouds and the rivers whom the

heathens used to worship in the hope of persuading the earth and the weather to be favourable to them, and bless their harvests, were their kings; that idols of wood and stone, and evil spirits of lust, and cruelty, and covetousness, were not their kings; but that God was their King; that He loved them, He pitied them in spite of all their sins; that He had sent His only begotten Son into the world to teach them, to live for them—to die for them—to claim them for His own. And, therefore, they were to go and baptize all nations, as a sign that they were to repent, and change, and put away all their old false and evil heathen life, and rise to a new life, they and their children after them, as God's children, God's family, brothers of the Son of God. And they were to baptize them into a name; showing that they belonged to those into whose name they were baptized; into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They were to be baptized into the name of the Father, as a sign that God was their Father, and they His children. They were to be baptized into the name of the Son, as a sign that the Son, Jesus Christ, was their King and head; and not merely their King and head, but their Saviour, who had taken away the sin of the world, and redeemed it for God, with His own most precious blood; and not merely their Saviour, but their pattern; that they might know that they were bound to become as far as is possible for mortal man such sons of God as Jesus himself had been, like Him obedient, pure, forgiving, brotherly, caring for each other and not for themselves, doing their heavenly Father's will and not their own. And they were to baptize all nations into the name of the Holy Spirit, for a sign that God's Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, would be with them, to give them new life, new holiness, new manfulness;

to teach, and guide, and strengthen them for ever. That was the gospel which they had to preach. The good news that the Son of God was the King of men. That was the name into which they were to baptize all nations—the name of children of God, members of Christ, heirs of a heavenly and spiritual kingdom, which should go on age after age, for ever, growing and spreading men knew not how, as the grains of mustard-seed, which at first the least of all seeds, grows up into a great tree, and the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it—to go on, I say, from age to age, improving, cleansing, and humanising, and teaching the whole world, till the kingdoms of the earth became the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. That was the work which the Apostles had given them to do. Do you not see, friends, that unless those Apostles had been the most selfish of men, unless all they cared for was their own gain and comfort, they must have rejoiced? The whole world was to be set right—what matter what happened to them? And, therefore, I said at the beginning of my sermon, that a sure way to know whether our minds were in a right state, was to see whether we felt about it as the Apostles felt. The Bible tells us to rejoice always, to praise and give thanks to God always. If we believe what the Apostles believed, we shall be joyful; if we do not, we shall not be joyful. If we believe in the words which the Lord spoke before He ascended on high, we shall be joyful. If we believe that all power in heaven and earth is His, we shall be joyful. If we believe that the son of the village maiden has ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, we shall be joyful. If we believe that, as our baptism told us, God is our Father, the Son of God our Saviour, the Spirit of God ready to teach and guide us, we shall be

joyful. Do you answer me, "But the world goes on so ill; there is so much sin, and misery, and folly, and cruelty in it; how can we be joyful?" I answer: There was a hundred times as much sin, and misery, and folly, and cruelty, in the Apostles' time, and yet they were joyful, and full of gladness, blessing and praising God. If you answer, "But we are so slandered, and neglected, and misunderstood, and hard-worked, and ill-treated; we have no time to enjoy ourselves, or do the things which we should like best. How can we be joyful?" I answer: So were the Apostles. They knew that they would be a hundred times as much slandered, and neglected, and misunderstood, as you can ever be; that they would have far less time to enjoy themselves, far less opportunity of doing the things which they liked best, than you can ever have; they knew that misery, and persecution, and a shameful death were before them, and yet they were joyful and full of gladness, blessing and praising God. And why should you not be? For what was true for them is true for you. They had no blessing, no hope, but what you have just as good a right to as they had. They were joyful, because God was their Father, and God is your Father. They were joyful because they and all men belonged to God's family; and you belong to it. They were joyful, because God's Spirit was promised to them, to make them like God; and God's Spirit was promised to you. They were joyful, because a poor man was king of heaven and earth; and that poor man, Jesus Christ, who was born at Bethlehem, is as much your King now as He was theirs then. They were joyful, because the whole world was going to improve under His rule and government; and the whole world is improving, and will go on improving for ever. They were joyful, because Jesus, whom

they had known as a poor, despised, crucified man on earth, had ascended up to heaven in glory; and if you believe the same, you will be joyful too. In proportion as you believe the mystery of Ascension-day; if you believe the words which the Lord spoke before He ascended, you will have cheerful, joyful, hopeful thoughts about yourselves, and about the whole world; if you do not, you will be in continual danger of becoming suspicious and despairing, fancying the world still worse than it is, fancying that God has neglected and forgotten it, fancying that the devil is stronger than God, and man's sins wider than Christ's redemption till you will think it neither worth while to do right yourselves, nor to make others do right towards you.

XII.

THE FOUNT OF SCIENCE.

(A Sermon Preached at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, May 4th, 1851, in behalf of the Westminster Hospital.)

When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yea, even for his enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.—PSALM lxviii. 18, and EPHESIANS iv. 8.

IF, a thousand years ago, a congregation in this place had been addressed upon the text which I have chosen, they would have had, I think, little difficulty in applying its meaning to themselves, and in mentioning at once innumerable instances of those gifts which the King of men had received for men, innumerable signs that the Lord God was really dwelling amongst them. But amongst those signs, I think, they would have mentioned several which we are not now generally accustomed to consider in such a light. They would have pointed not merely to the building of churches, the founding of schools, the spread of peace, the decay of slavery; but to the importation of foreign literature, the extension of the arts of reading, writing, painting, architecture, the improvement of agriculture, and the introduction of new and more successful methods of the cure of diseases. They might have expressed themselves on these points in a way that we consider now puerile and superstitious. They might have attributed to the efficacy of prayer, many cures which we

now attribute—shall I say? to no cause whatsoever. They may have quoted as an instance of St. Cuthbert's sanctity, rather than of his shrewd observations, his discovery of a spring of water in the rocky floor of his cell, and his success in growing barley upon the barren island where wheat refused to germinate; and we might have smiled at their superstition, and smiled, too, at their seeing any consequence of Christianity, any token that the kingdom of God was among them, in Bishop Wilfred's rescuing the Hampshire Saxons from the horrors of famine, by teaching them the use of fishing-nets. But still so they would have spoken—men of a turn of mind no less keen, shrewd, and practical than we, their children; and if we had objected to their so-called superstition that all these improvements in the physical state of England were only the natural consequences of the introduction of Roman civilisation by French and Italian missionaries, they would have smiled at us in their turn, not perhaps without some astonishment at our stupidity, and asked: "Do you not see, too, that *that* is in itself a sign of the kingdom of God—that these nations who have been for ages selfishly isolated from each other, except for purposes of conquest and desolation, should be now teaching each other, helping each other, interchanging more and more, generation by generation, their arts, their laws, their learning becoming fused down under the influence of a common Creed, and loyalty to one common King in Heaven, from their state of savage jealousy and warfare, into one great Christendom, and family of God?" And if, my friends, as I think, those forefathers of ours could rise from their graves this day, they would be inclined to see in our hospitals, in our railroads, in the achievements of our physical science, confirmation of that old superstition of theirs,

proofs of the kingdom of God, realisations of the gifts which Christ received for men, vaster than any of which they had ever dreamed. They might be startled at God's continuing those gifts to us, who hold on many points a creed so different from theirs. They might be still more startled to see in the Great Exhibition of all Nations, which is our present nine-days' wonder, that those blessings were not restricted by God even to nominal Christians, but that His love, His teaching, with regard to matters of civilisation and physical science, were extended, though more slowly and partially, to the Mahometan and the Heathen. And it would be a wholesome lesson to them, to find that God's grace was wider than their narrow theories; perhaps they may have learnt it already in the world of spirits. But of its *being* God's grace, there would be no doubt in their minds. They would claim unhesitatingly, and at once, that great Exhibition established in a Christian country, as a point of union and brotherhood for all people, for a sign that God was indeed claiming all the nations of the world as His own—proving by the most enormous facts that He had sent down a Pentecost, gifts to men which would raise them not merely spiritually, but physically and intellectually, beyond anything which the world had ever seen, and had poured out a spirit among them which would convert them in the course of ages, gradually, but most surely and really, from a pandemonium of conquerors and conquered, devourers and devoured, into a family of fellow-helping brothers, until the kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of God and of His Christ.

But I think one thing, if anything, would stagger their simple old Saxon faith; one thing would make them fearful, as indeed it makes the preacher this day,

that the time of real brotherhood and peace is still but too far off; and that the achievements of our physical science, the unity of this great Exhibition, noble as they are, are still only dim forecastings and prophecies, as it were, of a higher, nobler reality. And they would say sadly to us, their children: "Sons, you ought to be so near to God; He seems to have given you so much and to have worked among you as He never worked for any nation under heaven. How is it that you give the glory to yourselves, and not to Him?"

For do we give the glory of our scientific discoveries to God, in any real, honest, and practical sense? There may be some official and perfunctory talk of God's blessing on our endeavours; but there seems to be no real belief in us that God, the inspiration of God, is the very fount and root of the endeavours themselves; that He teaches us these great discoveries; that He gives us wisdom to get this wondrous wealth; that He works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. True, we keep up something of the form and tradition of the old talk about such things; we join in prayer to God to bless our great Exhibition, but we do not believe—we do not believe, my friends—that it was God who taught us to conceive, build, and arrange that Great Exhibition; and our notion of God's blessing it, seems to be God's absence from it; a hope and trust that God will leave it and us alone, and not "visit" it or us in it, or "interfere" by any "special providences," by storms, or lightning, or sickness, or panic, or conspiracy; a sort of dim feeling that we could manage it all perfectly well without God, but that as He exists, and has some power over natural phenomena, which is not very exactly defined, we must notice His existence over and above our work, lest He should become angry and "visit" us. . . . And this in

spite of words which were spoken by one whose office it was to speak them, as the representative of the highest and most sacred personage in these realms; words which deserve to be written in letters of gold on the high places of this city; in which he spoke of this Exhibition as an "approach to a more complete fulfilment of the great and sacred mission which man has to perform in the world;" when he told the English people that "man's reason being created in the image of God, he has to discover the laws by which Almighty God governs His creations, and by making these laws the standard of his action, to conquer nature to his use, himself a divine instrument;" when he spoke of "thankfulness to Almighty God for what he has already *given*," as the first feeling which that Exhibition ought to excite in us; and as the second, "the deep conviction that those blessings can only be realised in proportion to"—not, as some would have it, the rivalry and selfish competition—but "in proportion to the *help* which we are prepared to render to each other; and, therefore, by peace, love, and ready assistance, not only between individuals, but between all nations of the earth." We read those great words; but in the hearts of how few, alas! to judge from our modern creed on such matters, must the really important and distinctive points of them find an echo! To how few does this whole Exhibition seem to have been anything but a matter of personal gain or curiosity, for national aggrandisement, insular self-glorification, and selfish—I had almost said, treacherous—rivalry with the very foreigners whom we invited as our guests?

And so, too, with our cures of diseases. We speak of God's blessing the means, and God's blessing the cure. But all we really mean by blessing them, is permitting them. Do not our hearts confess that our

notion of His blessing the means, is His leaving the means to themselves and their own physical laws—leaving, in short, the cure to us and not preventing our science doing its work, and asserting His own existence by bringing on some unexpected crisis, or unfortunate relapse—if, indeed, the old theory that He does bring on such, be true?

Our old forefathers, on the other hand, used to believe that in medicine, as in everything else, God taught men all that they knew. They believed the words of the Wise Man when he said that "the Spirit of God gives man understanding." The method by which Solomon believed himself to have obtained all his physical science and knowledge of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop which groweth on the wall, was in their eyes the only possible method. They believed the words of Isaiah when he said of the tillage and the rotation of crops in use among the peasants of his country, that their God instructed them to discretion and taught them; and that even the various methods of threshing out the various species of grain came "forth from the Lord of hosts, who is excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working."

Such a method, you say, seems to you now miraculous. It did not seem to our forefathers miraculous that God should teach man; it seemed to them most simple, most rational, most natural, an utterly every-day axiom. They thought it was because so few of the heathen were taught by God that they were no wiser than they were. They thought that since the Son of God had come down and taken our nature upon Him, and ascended up on high and received gifts for men, that it was now the right and privilege of every human being who was willing to be taught of God, as the prophet foretold in those very words; and that baptism was the very sign

and seal of that fact—a sign that for every human being, whatever his age, sex, rank, intellect, or race, a certain measure of the teaching of God and of the Spirit of God was ready, promised, sure as the oath of Him that made heaven and the earth, and all things therein. That was Solomon's belief. We do not find that it made him a fanatic and an idler, waiting with folded hands for inspiration to come to him he knew not how nor whence. His belief that wisdom was the revelation and gift of God did not prevent him from seeking her as silver, and searching for her as hid treasures, from applying his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; and we do not find that it prevented our forefathers. Ceadmon's belief that God inspired him with the poetic faculty, did not make him the less laborious and careful versifier. Bishop John's blessing the dumb boy's tongue in the name of Him whom he believed to be Word of God and the Master of that poor dumb boy, did not prevent his anticipating some of the discoveries of our modern wise men, in setting about a most practical and scientific cure. Alfred's continual prayers for light and inspiration made him no less a laborious and thoughtful student of war and law, of physics, language, and geography. These old Teutons, for all these superstitions of theirs, were perhaps as businesslike and practical in those days as we their children are in these. But that did not prevent their believing that unless God showed them a thing, they could not see it, and thanking Him honestly enough for the comparative little which He did show them. But we who enjoy the accumulated teaching of ages—we to whose researches He is revealing year by year, almost week by week, wonders of which they never dreamed—we whom He has taught to make the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, the blind to see,

to exterminate the pestilence and defy the thunderbolt, to multiply millionfold the fruits of learning, to annihilate time and space, to span the heavens, and to weigh the sun—what madness is this which has come upon us in these last days, to make us fancy that we, insects of a day, have found out these things for ourselves, and talk big about the progress of the species, and the triumphs of intellect, and the all-conquering powers of the human mind, and give the glory of all this inspiration and revelation, not to God, but to ourselves? Let us beware, beware—lest our boundless pride and self-satisfaction, by some mysterious yet most certain law, avenge itself—lest like the Assyrian conqueror of old, while we stand and cry, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" our reason, like his, should reel and fall beneath the narcotic of our own maddening self-conceit, and while attempting to scale the heavens we overlook some pitfall at our feet, and fall as learned idiots, suicidal pedants, to be a degradation, and a hissing, and a shame.

However strongly you may differ from these opinions of our own forefathers with regard to the ground and cause of physical science, and the arts of healing, I am sure that the recollection of the thrice holy ground upon which we stand, beneath the shadow of venerable piles, witnesses for the creeds, the laws, the liberties, which those our ancestors have handed down to us, will preserve you from the temptation of dismissing with hasty contempt their thoughts upon any subject so important; will make you inclined to listen to their opinion with affection, if not with reverence; and save, perhaps, the preacher from a sneer when he declares that the doctrine of those old Saxon men is, in his belief, not only the most Scriptural, but the most rational and scientific explanation of the grounds of all human knowledge.

At least, I shall be able to quote in support of my own opinion a name from which there can be no appeal in the minds of a congregation of educated Englishmen —I mean Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, the spiritual father of the modern science, and, therefore, of the chemistry and the medicine of the whole civilised world. If there is one thing which more than another ought to impress itself on the mind of a careful student of his works, it is this—that he considered science as the inspiration of God, and every separate act of induction by which man arrives at a physical law, as a revelation from the Maker of those laws; and that the faith which gave him daring to face the mystery of the universe, and proclaim to men that they could conquer nature by obeying her, was his deep, living, practical belief that there was One who had ascended up on high and led captive in the flesh and spirit of a man those very idols of sense which had been themselves leading men's minds captive, enslaving them to the illusions of their own senses, forcing them to bow down in vague awe and terror before those powers of Nature, which God had appointed, not to be their tyrants, but their slaves. I will not special-plead particulars from his works, wherein I may consider that he asserts this. I will rather say boldly that the idea runs through every line he ever wrote; that unless seen in the light of that faith, the grounds of his philosophy ought to be as inexplicable to us, as they would, without it, have been impossible to himself. As has been well said of him: "Faith in God as the absolute ground of all human as well as of all natural laws; the belief that He had actually made Himself known to His creatures, and that it was possible for them to have a knowledge of Him, cleared from the phantasies and idols of their own imaginations and understandings; this was the

necessary foundation of all that great man's mind and speculations, to whatever point they were tending, and however at times they might be darkened by too close a familiarity with the corruptions and meannesses of man, or too passionate an addiction to the contemplation of Nature. Nor should it ever be forgotten that he owed all the clearness and distinctness of his mind to his freedom from that Pantheism which naturally disposes to a vague admiration and adoration of Nature, to the belief that it is stronger and nobler than ourselves; that we are servants, and puppets, and portions of it, and not its lords and rulers. If Bacon had in anywise confounded Nature with God—if he had not entertained the strongest practical feeling that men were connected with God through One who had taken upon Him their nature, it is impossible that he could have discovered that method of dealing with physics which has made a physical science possible."

No really careful student of his works, but must have perceived this, however glad, alas! he may have felt at times to thrust the thought of it from him, and try to think that Francis Bacon's Christianity was something over and above his philosophy—a religion which he left behind him at the church-door—or only sprinkled up and down his works so much of it as should shield him in a bigoted age from the suspicion of materialism. A strange theory, and yet one which so determined is man to see nothing, whether it be in the Bible or in the Novum Organum, but what each wishes to see, has been deliberately put forth again and again by men who fancy, forsooth, that the greatest of English heroes was even such an one as themselves. One does not wonder to find among the general characteristics of those writers who admire Bacon as a materialist, the most utter incapacity of philosophising on

Bacon's method, the very restless conceit, the hasty generalisation, the hankering after cosmogonic theories, which Bacon anathematises in every page. Yes, I repeat it, we owe our medical and sanitary science to Bacon's philosophy; and Bacon owed his philosophy to his Christianity.

Oh! it is easy for us, amid the marvels of our great hospitals, now grown commonplace in our eyes from very custom, to talk of the empire of mind over matter; for us—who reap the harvest whereof Bacon sowed the seed. But consider, how great the faith of that man must have been, who died in hope, not having received the promises, but seeing them afar off, and haunted to his dying day with glorious visions of a time when famine and pestilence should vanish before a scientific obedience—to use his own expression—to the will of God, revealed in natural facts. Thus we can understand how he dared to denounce all that had gone before him as blind and worthless guides, and to proclaim himself to the world as the one restorer of true physical philosophy. Thus we can understand how he, the cautious and patient man of the world, dared indulge in those vast dreams of the scientific triumphs of the future. Thus we can understand how he dared hint at the expectation that men would some day even conquer death itself; because he believed that man had conquered death already, in the person of its King and Lord—in the flesh of Him who ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. The "empire of mind over matter?" What practical proof had he of it amid the miserable alternations of empiricism and magic which made up the pseudo-science of his time; amid the theories and speculations of mankind, which, as he said, were "but a sort of madness—useless alike for discovery or for operation."

What right had he, more than any other man who had gone before him, to believe that man could conquer and mould to his will the unseen and tremendous powers which work in every cloud and every flower? that he could dive into the secret mysteries of his own body, and renew his youth like the eagle's? This ground he had for that faith—that he believed, as he says himself, that he must "begin from God; and that the pursuit of physical science clearly proceeds from Him, the Author of good, and Father of light." This gave him faith to say that in this as in all other Divine works, the smallest beginnings lead assuredly to some result, and that the "remark in spiritual matters, that the kingdom of God cometh without observation, is also found to be true in every great work of Divine Providence; so that everything glides on quietly without confusion or noise, and the matter is achieved before men either think or perceive that it is commenced." This it was which gave him courage to believe that his own philosophy might be the actual fulfilment of the prophecy, that in the last days many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased—words which, like hundreds of others in his works, sound like the outpourings of an almost blasphemous self-conceit, till we recollect that he looked on science only as the inspiration of God, and man's empire over nature only as the consequence of the redemption worked out for him by Christ, and begin to see in them the expressions of the deepest and most divine humility.

I doubt not that many here will be far more able than I am practically to apply the facts which I have been adducing to the cause of the hospital for which I am pleading. But there is one consequence of them to which I must beg leave to draw attention more

particularly, especially at the present era of our nation. If, then, these discoveries of science be indeed revelations and inspirations from God, does it not follow that all classes, even the poorest and the most ignorant, the most brutal, have an equal right to enjoy the fruits of them? Does it not follow that to give to the poor their share in the blessings which chemical and medical science are working out for us, is not a matter of charity or benevolence, but of *duty*, of indefeasible, peremptory, immediate duty? For consider, my friends; the Son of God descends on earth, and takes on Him not only the form, but the very nature, affections, trials, and sorrows of a man. He proclaims Himself as the person who has been all along ruling, guiding, teaching, improving men; the light who lighteth every man who cometh into the world. He proclaims Himself by acts of wondrous power to be the internecine foe and conqueror of every form of sorrow, slavery, barbarism, weakness, sickness, death itself. He proclaims Himself as One who is come to give His life for His sheep—One who is come to restore to men the likeness in which they were originally created, the likeness of their Father in Heaven, who accepteth the person of no man—who causeth His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, who sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust, in whose sight the meanest publican, if his only consciousness be that of his own baseness and worthlessness, is more righteous than the most-learned, respectable, and self-satisfied pharisee. He proclaims Himself the setter-up of a kingdom into which the publican and the harlot will pass sooner than the rich, the mighty, and the noble; a kingdom in which all men are to be brothers, and their bond of union loyalty to One who spared not His own life for the sheep, who came not

to do His own, but the will of the Father who had sent Him, and who showed by His toil among the poor, the outcast, the ignorant, and the brutal, what that same will was like. With His own life-blood He seals this Covenant between God and man. He offers up His own body as the first-fruits of this great kingdom of self-sacrifice. He takes poor fishermen and mechanics, and sends them forth to acquaint all men with the good news that God is their King, and to baptize them as subjects of that kingdom, bound to rise in baptism to a new life, a life of love, and brotherhood, and self-sacrifice, like His own. He commands them to call all nations to that sacred Feast wherein there is neither rich nor poor, but the same bread and the same wine are offered to the monarch and to the slave, as signs of their common humanity, their common redemption, their common interest—signs that they derive their life, their health, their reason, their every faculty of body, soul, and spirit, from One who walked the earth as the son of a poor carpenter, who ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He sends down His Spirit on them with gifts of language, eloquence, wisdom, and healing, as mere earnests and first-fruits; so they said, of that prophecy that He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, even upon slaves and handmaids. And these poor fishermen feel themselves impelled by a divine and irresistible impulse to go forth to the ends of the world, and face persecution, insult, torture, and death—not in order that they may make themselves lords over mankind, but that they may tell them that One is their Master, even Jesus Christ, both God and man—that *He* rules the world, and will rule it, and *can* rule it, that in His sight there is no distinction of race, or rank, or riches, neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or

free. And, as a fact, their message has prevailed and been believed; and in proportion as it has prevailed, not merely individual sanctity or piety, but liberty, law, peace, civilisation, learning, art, science, the gifts which he bought for men with His blood, have followed in its train: while the nations who have not received that message that God was their King, or having received it have forgotten it, or perverted it into a superstition and an hypocrisy, have in exactly that proportion fallen back into barbarism and bloodshed, slavery and misery. My friends, if this philosophy of history, this theory of human progress, or as I should call it, this Gospel of the Kingdom of God mean anything—does it not mean this? this which our forefathers believed, dimly and inconsistently perhaps, but still believed it, else we had not been here this day—that we are not our own, but the servants of Jesus Christ, and brothers of each other—that the very constitution and ground-law of this human species which has been redeemed by Christ, is the self-sacrifice which Christ displayed as the one perfection of humanity—that all rank, property, learning, science, are only held by their possessors in trust from that King who has distributed them to each according as He will, that each might use them for the good of all, certain—as certain as God's promise can make man—that if by giving up our own interest for the interest of others, we seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness between man and man, which we call *mercy*, according to which it is constituted, all other things, health, wealth, peace, and every other blessing which humanity can desire, shall be added unto us over and above, as the natural and necessary fruits of a society founded according to the will of God, and declared in his Son Jesus Christ, and therefore according to those

physical laws, whereof He is at once the Creator, the Director, and the Revealer?

This was the faith of our forefathers, both laity and clergy—that the Lord was King, be the people never so unquiet; that men were His stewards and His pupils only, and not His vicars; that they were equal in His sight, and not the slaves and tyrants of each other; and that the help that was done upon earth, He did it all Himself. Dimly, doubtless, they saw it, and inconsistently: but they saw it, and to their faith in that great truth we owe all that has made England really noble among the nations. Of the fruits of that faith every venerable building around us should remind us. To that faith in the laity, we owe the abolition of serfdom, the freedom of our institutions, the laws which provide equal justice between man and man; to that faith in the clergy, and especially in the monastic orders, we owe the endowment of our schools and universities, the improvement of agriculture, the preservation and the spread of all the liberal arts and sciences, as far as they were then discovered; so that every one of those abbeys which we now revile so ignorantly, became a centre of freedom, protection, healing, and civilisation, a refuge for the oppressed, a well-spring of mercy for the afflicted, a practical witness to the nation that property and science were not the private and absolute possession of men, but only held in trust from God for the benefit of the common weal: and just in proportion as in the 14th and 15th centuries those institutions fell from their first estate, and began to fancy that their wealth and wisdom was their own, acquired by their own cunning, to be used for their own aggrandizement, they became an imposture and imbecility, an abomination and a ruin. And it was this faith, too, in a still nobler and clearer

form, which at the Reformation inspired the age which could produce a Ridley, a Latimer, an Elizabeth, a Shakspeare, a Spenser, a Raleigh, a Bacon, and a Milton; which knit together, in spite of religious feuds and social wrongs, the nation of England with a bond which all the powers of hell endeavoured in vain to break. Doubtless, there too there was inconsistency enough. Elizabeth may have mixed up ambitious dynastic dreams with her intense belief that God had given her her wisdom, her learning, her mighty will, only to be the servant of His servants and defender of the faith. Men like Drake and Raleigh, while they were believing that God had sent them forth to smite with the sword of the Lord the devourers of the earth, the destroyers of religion, freedom, civilisation, and national life, may have been unfaithful to what they believed their divine mission, and fancied that they might use their wisdom and valour that God gave them for their selfish ends, till they committed (as some say) acts of rapacity and cruelty worthy of the merest buccaneer. But *that* was not what made them conquer—that was not what made the wealth and the might of Spain melt away before their little bands of heroes; but the same old faith, shining out in all their noblest acts and words, that "the Lord *was* King, and that the help that was done upon earth, He did it all Himself?" So again, Bacon may have fancied, and did fancy in his old age, that he might use his deep knowledge of mankind for his own selfish ends—that he might indulge himself in building himself up a name that might fill all the earth, that he who had done so much for God and for mankind, might be allowed to do at last somewhat for himself, and tempted, by a paltry bribe, fall for awhile, as David did before him, that God, and not he, might

have the glory of all his wisdom. But then he was less than himself; then he had but lost sight of his lode-star. Then he had forgotten, but only for awhile, that he owed all to the teaching of that God who had given to the young and obscure advocate the mission of affecting the destinies of nations yet unborn.

And believe me, my friends, even as it has been with our forefathers, so it will be with us. According to our faith will it be unto us, now as it was of old. In proportion as we believe that wealth, science, and civilisation are the work and property of man, in just that proportion we shall be tempted to keep them selfishly and exclusively to ourselves. The man of science will be tempted to hide his discoveries, though men may be perishing for lack of them, till he can sell them to the highest bidder; the rich man will be tempted to purchase them for himself, in order that he may increase his own comfort and luxury, and feel comparatively lazy and careless about their application to the welfare of the masses; he will be tempted to pay an exorbitant price for anything that can increase his personal convenience, and yet when the question is about improving the supply of necessaries to the poor, stand haggling about considerations of profitable investment, excuse himself from doing the duty which lies nearest to him by visions of distant profit, of which a thousand unexpected accidents may deprive him after all, and make his boasted scientific care for the wealth of the nation an excuse for leaving tens of thousands worse housed and worse fed than his own beasts of burden. The poor man will be tempted franctically to oppose his selfishness and unbelief to the selfishness and unbelief of the rich, and clutch from him by force the comfort which really belong to neither of them, in order that

he may pride himself in them and misuse them in his turn; and the clergy will be tempted, as they have too often been tempted already, to fancy that reason is the enemy, and not the twin sister of faith; to oppose revelation to science, as if God's two messages could contradict each other; to widen the Manichæan distinction between secular and spiritual matters, so pleasant to the natural atheism of fallen man; to fancy that they honour God by limiting as much as possible His teaching, His providence, His wisdom, His love, and His kingdom, and to pretend that they are defending the creeds of the Catholic Church, by denying to them any practical or real influence on the economic, political, and physical welfare of mankind. But in proportion as we hold to the old faith of our forefathers concerning science and civilisation, we shall feel it not only a duty, but a glory and a delight, to make all men sharers in them; to go out into the streets and lanes of the city and call in the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, that they may sit down and take their share of the good things which God has provided in His kingdom for those who obey Him. Every new discovery will be hailed by us as a fresh boon from God to be bestowed by the rain and the sunshine freely upon us all. The sight of every sufferer will make us ready to suspect and to examine ourselves lest we should be in some indirect way the victim of some neglect or selfishness of our own. Every disease will be a sign to us that in some respect or other, the physical or moral laws of human nature have been overlooked or broken. The existence of an unhealthy locality, the recurrence of an epidemic, will be to us a subject of public shame and self-reproach. Men of science will no longer go up and down entreating mankind in vain to make use of their discoveries; the

sanitary reformer will be no longer like Wisdom crying in the streets and no man regarding her; and in every ill to which flesh is heir we shall see an enemy of our King and Lord, and an intruder into His Kingdom, against which we swore at our baptism to fight with an inspiring and delicious certainty that God will prosper the right; that His laws cannot change; that nature, and the disturbances and poisons, and brute powers thereof, were meant to be the slaves, and not the tyrants of a race whose head has conquered the grave itself.

This is no speculative dream. The progress of science is daily proving it to be an actual truth; proving to us that a large proportion of diseases—how large a proportion, no man yet dare say—are preventible by science under the direction of that common justice and mercy which man owes to man. The proper cultivation of the soil, it is now clearly seen, will exterminate fevers and agues, and all the frightful consequences of malaria. An attention to *those* simple decencies and cleanlinesses of life of which even the wild animals feel the necessity, will prevent the epidemics of our cities, and all the frightful train of secondary diseases which follow them, or supply their place. The question which is generally more and more forcing itself on the minds of scientific men is not how many diseases are, but how few are not, the consequences of man's ignorance, barbarism, and folly. The medical man is felt more and more to be as necessary in health as he is in sickness, to be the fellow-workman not merely of the clergyman, but of the social reformer, the political economist, and the statesman; and the first object of his science to be prevention, and not cure. But if all this be true, as true it is, we ought to begin to look on hospitals as

many medical men I doubt not do already, in a sadder though in a no less important light. When we remember that the majority of cases which fill their wards are cases of more or less directly preventible diseases, the fruits of our social neglect, too often of our neglect of the sufferers themselves, too often also our neglect of their parents and forefathers; when we think how many a bitter pang is engendered and propagated from generation to generation in the noisome alleys and courts of this metropolis, by foul food, foul bedrooms, foul air, foul water, by intemperance, the natural and almost pardonable consequence of want of water, depressing and degrading employments, and lives spent in such an atmosphere of filth as our daintier nostrils could not endure a day: then we should learn to look upon these hospitals not as acts of charity, supererogatory benevolences of ours towards those to whom we owe nothing, but as confessions of sin, and worthy fruits of penitence; as poor and late and partial compensation for misery which *we* might have prevented. And when again, taking up scientific works, we find how vast a proportion of the remaining cases of disease are produced directly or indirectly by the unhealthiness of certain occupations, so certainly that the scientific man can almost prophesy the average shortening of life, and the peculiar form of disease, incident to any given form of city labour—when we find, to quote a single instance, that a large proportion—one half, as I am informed—of the female cases in certain hospitals, are those of women-servants suffering from diseases produced by overwork in household labour, especially by carrying heavy weights up the steep stairs of our London houses—when we consider the large proportion of accident cases which are the result, if not always of neglect in our social

arrangements, still of danger incurred in labouring for us, we shall begin to feel that our debts towards the poorer classes, for whom this and other hospitals are instituted, swells and mounts up to a burden which ought to be and would be intolerable to us, if we had not some such means as this hospital affords of testifying our contrition for neglect for which we cannot atone, and of practically claiming in the hospital our brotherhood with those masses whom we pass by so carelessly in the workshop and the street. What matters it that they have undertaken a life of labour from necessity, and with a full consciousness of the dangers they incur in it? For whom have they been labouring, but for us? Their handiwork renders our houses luxurious. We wear the clothes they make. We eat the food they produce. They sit in darkness and the shadow of death that we may enjoy light and life and luxury and civilisation. True, they are free men, in name, not free though from the iron necessity of crushing toil. Shall we make their liberty a cloak for our licentiousness? and because they are our brothers and not our slaves, answer with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" What if we have paid them the wages which they ask? We do not feed our beasts of burden only as long as they are in health, and when they fall sick leave them to cure themselves and starve—and these are not our beasts of burden; they are members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. Prove it to them, then, for they are in bitter danger of forgetting it in these days, Prove to them, by helping to cure their maladies, that they are members of Christ, that they do indeed belong to Him who without fee or payment freely cured the sick of Judea in old time. Prove to them that they are children of God by treating them as such—as

children of Him without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, children of Him whose love is over all His works, children of Him who defends the widow and the fatherless, and sees that those who are in need or necessity have right, and who maketh inquiry for the blood of the innocent. Prove to them that they are inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, by proving to them first of all that the Kingdom of Heaven exists, that all, rich and poor alike, are brothers, and One their Master, He who ascended up on high and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, the gifts of healing, the gifts of science, the gifts of civilisation, the gifts of law, the gifts of order, the gifts of liberty, the gifts of the spirit of love and brotherhood, of fellow-feeling and self-sacrifice, of justice and humility, a spirit fit for a world of redeemed and pardoned men, in which mercy is but justice, and self-sacrifice the truest self-interest; a world, the King and Master of which is One who poured out his own life-blood for the sake of those who hated him, that men should henceforth live not for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again, and ascended up on high and received gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

And because all general truths can only be verified in particular instances, verify your general faith in that Christianity which you profess in this particular instance, by doing the duty which lies nearest to you, and *giving, as it is called,* to this hospital for which I now plead.

Thanks to the spirit and the attainments of the average of English medical men and chaplains, to praise the management of any hospital which is under their care, is a needless impertinence. Do you find funds, there will be no fear as to their being well employed; and no fear, alas! either of their services

being in full demand, while the sanitary state of vast streets of South London, lying close to this hospital, are in a state in which they are, and in which private cupidity and neglect seem willing to compel them to remain. It is on account of its contiguity to these neglected, destitute, and poisonous localities, that this hospital seems to me especially valuable. But though situated in a part of London where its presence is especially needed, it has not, from various causes which have arisen from no fault of its own, attracted as much public notice as some other more magnificent foundations; while it possesses one feature, peculiar I believe to it, among our London hospitals, which seems to me to render it especially deserving of support: I speak of the ward for incurable patients, in which, instead of ending their days in the melancholy wards of a workhouse, or amid those pestilential and crowded dwellings which have perhaps produced their maladies, and which certainly will aggravate them, they may have their heavy years of hopeless suffering softened by a continued supply of constant comforts, and constant medical solicitude, such as the best-conducted workhouse, or the most laborious staff of parish surgeons, and district visitors, ay, not even the benevolence and self-sacrifice of friends and relations, can possibly provide. I beseech you, picture to yourselves the amount of mere physical comfort, not to mention the higher blessings of spiritual teaching and consolation, accruing to some poor tortured cripple, in the wards of this hospital; compare it with the very brightest lot possible for him in the dwellings of the lower, or even of the middle classes of the metropolis; then recollect that these hospital luxuries, which would be unattainable by him elsewhere, are but a tithe of those which you, in his situation, would

consider absolute necessaries, without which a life of suffering, ay, even of health, were intolerable—and do unto others this day, as you would that others should do unto you!

I might have taken some other and more popular method of drawing your attention to this institution. I might have tried to excite your feelings and sympathies by attempts at pathetic or picturesque descriptions of suffering. But the minister of a just God is bound to proclaim that God demands not *sentiment*, but *justice*. The Bible knows nothing of the "religious sentiments and emotions," whereof we hear so much talk nowadays. It speaks of *duty*. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we *ought* to love one another."

I might also have attempted to flatter you into giving, by representing this as a "*good work*," a work of charity and piety, well pleasing to God; a sort of work of Protestant supererogation, fruits of faith which we may show, if we like, up to a certain not very clearly defined point of benevolence, but the absence of which probably will not seriously affect our eternal salvation, still less our right to call ourselves orthodox, Protestants, churchmen, worthy, kind-hearted, respectable, blameless. The Bible knows nothing of such a religion; it neither coaxes nor flatters, it *commands*. It demands mercy, because mercy is justice; and declares with what measure we mete to others, it shall be surely measured to us again. If therefore my words shall seem to some here, to be not so much a humble request as a peremptory demand, I cannot help it. I have pleaded the cause of this hospital on the only solid ground of which I am aware, for doing anything but evil to everyone around us who is not a private friend, or a member of one's own family. I ask you to help the poor to their share in the gifts which Christ

received for men, because they are His gifts, and neither ours nor any man's. Among these venerable buildings, the signs and witnesses of the Kingdom of God, and the blessings of that Kingdom which for a thousand years have been spreading and growing among us—I ask it of you as citizens of that Kingdom. Prove your brotherhood to the poor by restoring to them a portion of that wealth which, without their labour, you could never have possessed. Prove your brotherhood to them in a thousand ways—in every way—in this way, because at this moment it happens to be the nearest and the most immediate, and because the necessity for it is nearer, more immediate, to judge by the signs of the times, and most of all by their self-satisfied unconsciousness of danger, their loud and shallow self-glorification, than ever it was before. Work while it is called to-day, lest the night come wherein no man can work, but only take his wages.

Again I say, I may seem to some here to have pleaded the cause of this hospital in too harsh and peremptory a tone. . . . And yet I have a ground of hope, in the English love of simple justice, in the noble instances of benevolence and self-sacrifice among the wealthy and educated, which are, thank God! increasing in number daily, as the need of them increases—in these, I say, I have a ground of hope that there are many here to-day who would sooner hear the language of truth than of flattery; who will be more strongly moved toward a righteous deed by being told that it is their duty toward God, their country, and their fellow-citizens, than by any sentimental baits for personal sympathy, or for the love of Pharisaic ostentation.

XIII.

FIRST SERMON ON THE CHOLERA.

(*Sunday Morning, September 27th*, 1849.)

God's judgments are from above, out of the sight of the wicked.
—PSALM X. 5.

WE have just been praying to God to remove from us the cholera, which we call a judgment of God, a chastisement; and God knows we have need enough to do so. But we can hardly expect God to withdraw His chastisement unless we correct the sins for which He chastised us, and therefore unless we find out what particular sins have brought the evil on us. For it is mere cant and hypocrisy, my friends, to tell God, in a general way, that we believe He is punishing us for our sins, and then to avoid carefully confessing any particular sin, and to get angry with anyone who tells us boldly *which* sin God is punishing us for. But so goes the world. Everyone is ready to say, "Oh! yes, we are all great sinners, miserable sinners!" and then if you charge them with any particular sin, they bridle up and deny *that* sin fiercely enough, and all sins one by one, confessing themselves great sinners, and yet saying that they don't know what sins they have committed. No man really believes himself a sinner, no man really confesses his sins, but the man who can honestly put his finger on *this* sin or *that* sin which he has committed, and is not afraid to confess to God, "*This* sin

and *that* sin have I done—*this* bad habit and *that* bad habit have I cherished within me." Therefore, I say, it is no use for us Englishmen to dream that we can flatter and persuade the great God of Heaven and earth into taking away the cholera from us, unless we find out and confess openly what we have done to bring on the cholera, and unless we repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, by amending our habits on that point, and doing everything for the future which shall not bring on the cholera, but keep it off.

Do not let us believe this time, my friends, in the pitiable, insincere way in which all England believed when the cholera was here sixteen years ago. When they saw human beings dying by thousands, they all got frightened, and proclaimed a Fast and confessed their sins and promised repentance in a general way. But did they repent of and confess those sins which had caused the cholera? Did they repent of and confess the covetousness, the tyranny, the carelessness, which in most great towns, and in too many villages also, forces the poor to lodge in undrained stifling hovels, unfit for hogs, amid vapours and smells which send forth on every breath the seeds of rickets and consumption, typhus and scarlet fever, and worse and last of all, the cholera? Did they repent of their sin in that? Not they. Did they repent of the carelessness and laziness and covetousness which sends meat and fish up to all our large towns in a half-putrid state; which fills every corner of London and the great cities with slaughter-houses, over-crowded graveyards, undrained sewers? Not they. To confess their sins in a general way cost them a few words; to confess and repent of the real particular sins in themselves, was a very different matter; to amend them would have touched vested interests, would have cost money, the

Englishman's god; it would have required self-sacrifice of pocket, as well as of time. It would have required manful fighting against the prejudices, the ignorance, the self-conceit, the laziness, the covetousness of the wicked world. So they could not afford to repent and amend of all *that*. And when those great and good men, the Sanitary Commissioners, proved to all England fifteen years ago, that cholera always appeared where fever had appeared, and that both fever and cholera always cling exclusively to those places where there was bad food, bad air, crowded bedrooms, bad drainage and filth—that such were the laws of God and Nature, and always had been; they took no notice of it, because it was the poor rather than the rich who suffered from those causes. So the filth of our great cities was left to ferment in poisonous cesspools, foul ditches and marshes and muds, such as those now killing people by hundreds in the neighbourhood of Plymouth; for one house or sewer that was improved, a hundred more were left just as they were in the first cholera; as soon as the panic of superstitious fear was past, carelessness and indolence returned. Men went back, the covetous man to his covetousness, and the idler to his idleness. And behold! sixteen years are past, and the cholera is as bad as ever among us.

But you will say, perhaps, it is presumptuous to say that Englishmen have brought the cholera on themselves, that it is God's judgment, and that we cannot explain His inscrutable Providence. Ah! my friends, that is a poor excuse and a common one, for leaving a great many sins as they are! When people do not wish to do God's will, it is a very pleasant thing to talk about God's will as something so very deep and unfathomable, that poor human beings cannot be expected to find it

out. It is an old excuse, and a great favourite with Satan, I have no doubt. Why cannot people find out God's will?—Because they do not *like* to find it out, lest it should shame them and condemn them, and cost them pleasure or money—because their eyes are blinded with covetousness and selfishness, so that they cannot see God's will, even when they *do* look for it, and then they go and cant about God's judgments; while those judgments, as the text says, are far above out of their mammon-blinded and prejudice-blinded sight. What do they mean by that word? Come now, my friends! let us face the question like men. What do you mean really when you call the cholera, or fever, or affliction at all, God's judgment? Do you merely mean that God is punishing you, you don't know for what, and you can't find out for what? but that all which He expects of you is to bear it patiently, and then go and do afterwards just what you did before? Dare anyone say that who believes that God is a God of justice, much less a God of love? What would you think of a father who punished his children, and then left them to find out as they could what they were punished for? And yet that is the way people talk of pestilence and of great afflictions, public and private. They are not ashamed to accuse God of a cruelty and an injustice which they would be ashamed to confess themselves! How can men, even religious men often, be so blasphemous? Mainly, I think, because they do not really believe in God at all, they only believe about Him—they believe that they ought to believe in Him. They have no living personal faith in God or Christ; they do not know God; they do not know God's character, and what to believe of Him, and what to expect of Him; or what they ought to say of Him; because they do not

know, they have not studied, they have not loved the character of Christ, who is the express image and likeness of God. Therefore God's judgments are far away out of their sight; therefore they make themselves a God in their own image and after their own likeness, lazy, capricious, revengeful; therefore they are not afraid or ashamed to say that God sends pestilence into a country without showing that country why it is sent. But another great reason, I believe, why God's judgments in this and other matters are far above out of our sight, is the careless, insincere way of using words which we English have got into, even on the most holy and awful matters. I suppose there never was a nation in the world so diseased through and through with the spirit of cant, as we English are now: except perhaps the old Jews, at the time of our Lord's coming. You hear men talking as if they thought God did not understand English, because they cling superstitiously to the letter of the Bible in proportion as they lose its spirit. You hear men taking words into their mouths which might make angels weep and devils tremble, with a coolness and oily, smooth carelessness which shows you that they do not feel the force of what they are saying. You hear them using the words of Scripture, which are in themselves stricter and deeper than all the books of philosophy in the world, in such a loose unscriptural way, that they make them mean anything or nothing. They use the words like parrots, by rote, just because their forefathers used them before them. They will tell you that cholera is a judgment for our sins, "in a sense," but if you ask them for what sins, or in what sense, they fly off from that *home* question, and begin mumbling commonplaces about the inscrutable decrees of Providence, and so on. It is most sad, all this; and most fearful also.

Therefore, I asked you, my friends, what is the meaning of that word judgment? In common talk, people use it rightly enough, but when they begin to talk of God's judgments, they speak as if it merely meant punishments. Now judgment and punishment are two things. When a judge gives judgment, he either acquits or condemns the accused person; he gives the case for the plaintiff, or for the defendant: the punishment of the guilty person, if he be guilty, is a separate thing, pronounced and inflicted afterwards. His judgment, I say, is his *opinion* about the person's guilt, and even so God's judgments are the expression of His opinion about our guilt. But there is this difference between man and God in this matter—a human judge gives his opinion in words, God gives His in *events*: therefore there is no harm for a human judge, when he has told a person why he must punish, to punish him in some way that has nothing to do with his crime—for instance, to send a man to prison because he steals, though it would be far better if criminals could be punished in kind, and if the man who stole could be forced either to make restitution, or work out the price of what he stole in hard labour. For this is God's plan—God always pays sinners back in kind, that He may not merely punish them, but *correct* them; so that by the kind of their punishment, they may know the kind of their sin. God punishes us, as I have often told you, not by His caprice, but by His laws. He does not *break His laws* to harm us; the laws themselves harm us, when we break them and get in their way. It is always so, you will find, with great national afflictions. I believe, when we know more of God and His laws, we shall find it true even in our smallest private sorrows. God is unchangeable; He does not lose His temper, as heathens and superstitious men fancy, to punish us. He does

not change His order to punish us. *We* break His order, and the order goes on in spite of us and crushes us: and so we get God's judgment, God's opinion of our breaking His laws. You will find it so almost always in history. If a nation is laid waste by war, it is generally their own fault. They have sinned against the law which God has appointed for nations. They have lost courage and prudence, and trust in God, and fellow-feeling and unity, and they have become cowardly and selfish and split up into parties, and so they are easily conquered by their own fault, as the Bible tells us the Jews were by the Chaldeans; and their ruin is God's judgment, God's opinion plainly expressed of what He thinks of them for having become cowardly and selfish, and factious and disinterested. So it is with famine again. Famines come by a nation's own fault—they are God's plainly spoken opinion of what *He* thinks of breaking His laws of industry and thrift, by improvidence and bad farming. So when a nation becomes poor and bankrupt, it is its own fault; that nation has broken the laws of political economy which God has appointed for nations, and its ruin is God's judgment, God's plain-spoken opinion again of the sins of extravagance, idleness, and reckless speculation.

So with pestilence and cholera. They come only because we break God's laws; as the wise poet well says:

> Voices from the depths *of Nature* borne
> Which vengeance on the guilty head proclaim.

—"Of nature;" of the order and constitution which God has made for this world we live in, and which if we break them, though God in his mercy so orders the world that punishment comes but seldom even to

our worst offences, yet surely do bring punishment sooner or later if broken, in the common course of nature. Yes, my friends, as surely and naturally as drunkenness punishes itself by a shaking hand and a bloated body, so does filth avenge itself by pestilence. Fever and cholera, as you would expect them to be, are the expression of God's judgment, God's opinion, God's handwriting on the wall against us for our sins of filth and laziness, foul air, foul food, foul drains, foul bedrooms. Where they are, there is cholera. Where they are not, there is none, and will be none, because they who do not break God's laws, God's laws will not break them. Oh! do not think me harsh, my friends; God knows it is no pleasant thing to have to speak bitter and upbraiding words; but when one travels about this noble land of England, and sees what a blessed place it might be, if we would only do God's will, and what a miserable place it is just because we will not do God's will, it is enough to make one's soul boil over with sorrow and indignation; and then when one considers that other men's faults are one's own fault too, that one has been adding to the heap of sins by one's own laziness, cowardice, ignorance, it is enough to break one's heart—to make one cry with St. Paul, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Ay, my friends, the state of things in England now is enough to drive an earnest man to despair, if one did not know that all our distresses, and this cholera, like the rest, are indeed *God's* judgments; the judgments and expressed opinions, not of a capricious tyrant, but of a righteous and loving Father, who chastens us just because He loves us, and afflicts us only to teach us His will, which alone is life and happiness. Therefore we may believe that this very cholera is

meant to be a blessing; that if we will take the lesson it brings, it will be a blessing to England. God grant that all ranks may take the lesson—that the rich may amend their idleness and neglect, and the poor amend their dirt and stupid ignorance; then our children will have cause to thank God for the cholera, if it teaches us that cleanliness is indeed next to holiness, if it teaches us, rich and poor, to make the workman's home what it ought to be. And believe me, my friends, that day will surely come; and these distresses, sad as they are for the time, are only helping to hasten it—the day when the words of the Hebrew prophets shall be fulfilled, where they speak of a state of comfort and prosperity, and civilisation, such as men had never reached in their time—how the wilderness shall blossom like the rose, and there shall be heaps of corn high on the mountain-tops, and the cities shall be green as grass on the earth, instead of being the smoky, stifling hot-beds of disease which they are now—and how from the city of God streams shall flow for the healing of the nations: strange words, those, and dim; too deep to be explained by any one meaning, or many meanings, such as our small minds can give them; but full of blessed cheering hope. For of whatever they speak, they speak at least of this—of a time when all sorrow and sighing shall be done away, when science and civilisation shall go hand in hand with godliness—when God shall indeed dwell in the hearts of men, and His kingdom shall be fulfilled among them, when "His ways shall be known upon earth at last, and His saving health among all nations"—of a time when all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest, and be indeed His children, doing no sin, because they will have given up themselves, their selfishness and cruelty and

covetousness, and stupidity and laziness, to be changed and renewed into God's likeness. Then all these distresses and pestilences, which, as I have shown you, come from breaking the will of God, will have passed away like ugly dreams, and all the earth shall be blessed, because all the earth shall at last be fulfilling the words of the Lord's Prayer, and God's will shall be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven. Oh! my friends, have hope. Do you think Christ would have bid us pray for what would never happen? Would He have bid us all to pray that God's will might be done unless He had known surely that God's will would one day be done by men on earth below even as it is done in heaven?

XIV.

SECOND SERMON ON THE CHOLERA.

Visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children.—EXODUS xx. 5.

IN my sermon last Sunday I said plainly that cholera, fever, and many more diseases were man's own fault, and that they were God's judgments just because they were man's own fault, because they were God's plain-spoken opinion of the sin of filth and of habits of living unfit for civilised Christian men.

But there is an objection which may arise in some of your minds, and if it has not risen in *your* minds, still it has in other people's often enough; and therefore I will state it plainly, and answer it as far as God shall give me wisdom. For it is well to get to the root of all matters, and of this matter of Pestilence among others; for if we do believe this Pestilence to be God's judgment, then it is a spiritual matter most proper to be spoken of in a place like this church, where men come as spiritual beings to hear that which is profitable for their souls. And it *is* profitable for their souls to consider this matter; for it has to do, as I see more and more daily, with the very deepest truths of the Gospel; and accordingly as we believe the Gospel, and believe really that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and our King, the New Adam, the firstborn among many brethren, who has come down to proclaim to us that we are all brothers in

Him—in proportion as we believe *that*, I say, shall we act upon this very matter of public cleanliness.

The objection which I mean is this: people say it is very hard and unfair to talk of cholera or fever being people's own fault, when you see persons who are not themselves dirty, and innocent little children, who if they are dirty are only so because they are brought up so, catch the infection and die of it. You cannot say it is their fault. Very true. I did not say it was their fault. I did not say that each particular person takes the infection by his own fault, though I do say that nine out of ten do. And as for little children, of course it is not their fault. But, my friends, it must be someone's fault. No one will say that the world is so ill made that these horrible diseases must come in spite of all man's care. If it was so, plagues, pestilences, and infectious fevers would be just as common now in England, and just as deadly as they were in old times; whereas there is not one infectious fever now in England for ten that there used to be five hundred years ago. In ancient times fevers, agues, plague, smallpox, and other diseases, whose very names we cannot now understand, so completely are they passed away, swept England from one end to the other every few years, killing five people where they now kill one. Those diseases, as I said, have many of them now died out entirely; and those which remain are becoming less and less dangerous every year. And why? Simply because people are becoming more cleanly and civilised in their habits of living; because they are tilling and draining the land every year more and more, instead of leaving it to breed disease, as all uncultivated land does. It is not merely that doctors are becoming wiser: we ourselves are becoming more reasonable in our way of living.

For instance, in large districts both of Scotland and of the English fens, where fever and ague filled the country and swept off hundreds every spring and fall thirty years ago, fever and ague are now almost unknown, simply because the marshes have all been drained in the meantime. So you see that people can prevent these disorders, and therefore it must be someone's fault if they come. Now, whose fault is it? You dare not lay the blame on God. And yet you do lay the fault on God if you say that it is no *man's* fault that children die of fever. But I know what the answer to that will be: "We do not accuse God—it is the fault of the fall, Adam's curse which brought death and disease into the world." That is a common answer, and the very one I want to hear. What? is it just to say, as many do, that all the diseases which ever tormented poor little innocent children all over the world, came from Adam's sinning six thousand years ago, and yet that it is unfair to say that one little child's fever came from his parents' keeping a filthy house a month ago? That is swallowing a camel and straining at a gnat—that God should be just in punishing all mankind for Adam's sin, and yet unjust in punishing one little child for its parents' sin. If the one is just the other must be just too, I think. If you believe the one, why not believe the other? Why? Because Adam's curse and "original" sin, as people call it, is a good and pleasant excuse for laying our sins and miseries at Adam's door; but the same rule is not so pleasant in the case of filth and fever, when it lays other people's miseries at our door.

I believe that all the misery in the world sprung from Adam's disobedience and falling from God. "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men, even on those who

had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression." So says the Bible, and I believe it says so truly. For this is the law of the earth, God's law which He proclaimed in the text. He does visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him. It is so. You see it around you daily. No one can deny it. Just as death and misery entered into the world by one man, so we see death and misery entering into many a family. A man or woman is a drunkard, or a rogue, or a swearer: how often their children grow up like them! We have all seen that, God knows, in this very parish. How much more in great cities, where boys and girls by thousands—oh, shame that it should be so in a Christian land!—grow up thieves from the breast, and harlots from the cradle. And why? Why are there, as they say, and I am afraid say too truly, in London alone upwards of 10,000 children under sixteen who live by theft and harlotry? Because the parents of these children are as bad as themselves—drunkards, thieves, and worse—and they bring up their children to follow their crimes. If that is not the fathers' sins being visited on the children, what is?

How often, again, when we see a wild young man, we say, and justly: "Poor fellow! there are great excuses for him, he has been so badly brought up." True, but his wildness will ruin him all the same, whether it be his father's fault or his own that he became wild. If he drinks he will ruin his health; if he squanders his money he will grow poor. God's laws cannot stop for him; he is breaking them, and they will avenge themselves on him. You see the same thing everywhere. A man fools away his money, and his innocent children suffer for it. A man ruins his health by debauchery, or a woman hers by laziness

or vanity or self-indulgence, and her children grow up weakly and inherit their parents' unhealthiness. How often again, do we see passionate parents have passionate children, stupid parents stupid children, mean and lying parents mean and lying children; above all, ignorant and dirty parents have ignorant and dirty children. How can they help being so? They cannot keep themselves clean by instinct; they cannot learn without being taught: and so they suffer for their parents' faults. But what is all this except God's visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children? Look again at a whole parish; how far the neglect or the wickedness of one man may make a whole estate miserable. There is one parish in this very union, and the curse of the whole union it is, which will show us that fearfully enough. See, too, how often when a good and generous young man comes into his estate, he finds it so crippled with debts and mortgages by his forefathers' extravagance, that he cannot do the good he would to his tenants, he cannot fulfil his duty as landlord where God has placed him, and so he and the whole estate must suffer for the follies of generations past. If that is not God visiting the sins of the fathers on the children, what is it?

Look again at a whole nation; the rulers of two countries quarrel, or pretend to quarrel, and go to war —and some here know what war is—just because there is some old grudge of a hundred years standing between two countries, or because rulers of whose names the country people, perhaps, never heard, have chosen to fall out, or because their forefathers by cowardice, or laziness, or division, or some other sin, have made the country too weak to defend itself; and for that poor people's property is destroyed, and little infants butchered, and innocent women suffer unspeak-

able shame. If that is not God visiting the sins of the fathers on the children, what is it?

It is very awful, but so it is. It is the law of this earth, the law of human kind, that the innocent often suffer for other's faults, just as you see them doing in cholera, fever, ague, smallpox, and other diseases which man can prevent if he chooses to take the trouble. There it is. We cannot alter it. Those who will may call God unjust for it. Let them first see, whether He is not only most just, but most merciful in making the world so, and no other way. I do not merely mean that whatever God does must be right. That is true, but it is a poor way of getting over the difficulty. God has taught us what is right and wrong, and He will be judged by His own rules. As Abraham said to Him when Sodom was to be destroyed: "That be far from Thee, to punish the righteous with the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Abraham knew what was right, and he expected God not to break that law of right. And we may expect the same of God. And I may be able, I hope, in my sermon next Sunday, to show you that in this matter God does break the law of right. Nevertheless, in the meantime, this is His way of dealing with men. When Sodom was destroyed He brought righteous Lot out of it. But Sodom was destroyed, and in it many a little infant who had never known sin. And just so when Lisbon was swallowed up by an earthquake, ninety years ago, the little children perished as well as the grown people—just as in the Irish famine fever last year, many a doctor and Roman Catholic priest, and Protestant clergyman, caught the fever and died while they were piously attending on the sick. They were acting like righteous men doing their duty at their posts; but God's laws could not turn aside for

them. Improvidence, and misrule, which had been working and growing for hundreds of years, had at last brought the famine fever, and even the righteous must perish by it. They had their sins, no doubt, as we all have; but then they were doing God's work bravely and honestly enough, yet the fever could not spare them any more than it could spare the children of the filthy parents, though they had not kept pigsties under their windows, nor cesspools at their doors. It could not spare them any more than it can spare the tenants of the negligent or covetous house-owner, because it is his fault and not theirs that his houses are undrained, overcrowded, destitute—as whole streets in many large towns are—of the commonest decencies of life. It may be the landlord's fault, but the tenants suffer. God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, and landlords ought to be fathers to their tenants, and must become fathers to them some day, and that soon, unless they intend that the Lord should visit on them all their sins, and their forefathers' also, even unto the third and fourth generation.

For do not fancy that because the innocent suffer with the guilty that therefore the guilty escape. Seldom do they escape in this world, and in the world to come never. The landlord who, as too many do, neglects his cottages till they become man-sties, to breed pauperism and disease—the parents whose carelessness and dirt poison their children and neighbours into typhus and cholera—their brother's blood will cry against them out of the ground. It will be required at their hands sooner or later, by Him who beholds iniquity and wrong, and who will not be satisfied in the day of His vengeance by Cain's old answer, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

We are every one of us our brother's keeper; and

if we do not choose to confess that, God will prove it to us in a way that we cannot mistake. A wise man tells a story of a poor Irish widow who came to Liverpool, and no one would take her in or have mercy on her, till, from starvation and bad lodging, as the doctor said, she caught typhus fever, and not only died herself, but gave the infection to the whole street, and seventeen persons died of it. "See," says the wise man, "the poor Irish widow was the Liverpool people's sister after all. She was of the same flesh and blood as they. The fever that killed her killed them, but they would not confess that they were her brothers. They shut their doors upon her, and so there was no way left for her to prove her relationship, but by killing seventeen of them with fever." A grim jest that, but a true one, like Elijah's jest to the Baal priests on Carmel. A true one, I say, and one that we have all need to lay to heart.

And I do earnestly trust in you that you will lay it to heart. We have had our fair warning here. We have had God's judgment about our cleanliness; His plain spoken opinion about the sanitary state of this parish. We deserve the fever, I am afraid; not a house in which it has appeared but has had some glaring neglect of common cleanliness about it; and if we do not take the warning God will surely some day repeat it. It will repeat itself by the necessary laws of nature; and we shall have the fever among us again, just as the cholera has reappeared in the very towns, and the very streets, where it was seventeen years ago, wherever they have not repented of and amended their filth and negligence. And I say openly, that those who have escaped this time may not escape next. God has made examples, and by no means always of the worst cottages. God's plan is to take one and leave another by way of warn-

ing. "It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" is a great and a sound law, and we must profit by it. So let not those who have escaped the fever fancy that they must needs be without fault. "Think ye that those sixteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, were sinners above all those that dwelt at Jerusalem? I say unto you, Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

And I say again, as I said last Sunday, that this is a spiritual question, a Gospel sermon; for by your conduct in this matter will your faith in the Gospel be proved. If you really believe that Jesus Christ came down from heaven and sacrificed Himself for you, you will be ready to sacrifice yourselves in this matter for those for whom He died; to sacrifice, without stint, your thought, your time, your money, and your labour. If you really believe that He is the sworn enemy of all misery and disease, you will show yourselves too the sworn enemies of everything that causes misery and disease, and work together like men to put all pestilential filth and damp out of this parish. If you really believe that you are all brothers, equal in the sight of God and Christ, you will do all you can to save your brothers from sickness and the miseries which follow it. If you really believe that your children are God's children, that at baptism God declares your little ones to be His, you will be ready to take any care or trouble, however new or strange it may seem, to keep your children safe from all foul smells, foul food, foul water, and foul air, that they may grow up healthy, hearty, and cleanly, fit to serve God as christened, free, and civilised Englishmen should in this great and awful time, the most wonderful time that the earth has ever seen, into which it has pleased God of His great mercy to let us all be born.

XV.

THIRD SERMON ON THE CHOLERA.

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.—EXODUS, xx. 5.

MANY of you were perhaps surprised and puzzled by my saying in my last sermon that God's visiting the sins of the fathers on the children, and letting the innocent suffer for the guilty, was a blessing and not a curse—a sign of man's honour and redemption, not of his shame and ruin. But the more I have thought of those words, the more glad I am that I spoke them boldly, the more true I find them to be.

I say that there is in them the very deepest and surest ground for hope. "Yes," some of you may say, "to be sure when we see the innocent suffering for the guilty, it is a plain proof that another world must come some day, in which all that unfairness shall be set right." Well, my friends, it does prove that, but I should be very sorry if it did not prove a great deal more than that—this suffering of the innocent for the guilty. I have no heart to talk to you about the next life, unless I can give you some comfort, some reason for trusting in God in this life. I never saw much good come of it. I never found it do my own soul any good, to be told: "*This* life and *this* world in which you now live are given up irremediably to misrule and deceit, poverty and pestilence, death and the devil.

You cannot expect to set this world right—you must look to the next world. Everything will be set right there." That sounds fine and resigned; and there seems to be a great deal of trust in God in it; but, as I think, there is little or none; and I say so from the fruits I see it bear. If people believe that this world is the devil's world, and only the next world God's, they are easily tempted to say: "Very well, then, we must serve the devil in this world, and God in the next. We must, of course, take great care to get our souls saved when we die, that we may go to heaven and live for ever and ever; but as to this world and this life, why, we must follow the ways of the world. It is not our fault that they have nothing to do with God. It is not our fault that society and the world are all rotten and accursed; we found them so when we were born, and we must make the best of a bad matter and sail as the world does, and be covetous and mean and anxious—how can we help it?—and stand on our own rights, and take care of number one; and even do what is not quite right now and then—for how can we help it?—or how else shall we get on in this poor lost, fallen, sinful world!"

And so it comes, my friends, that you see people professing—ay, and believing, Gospel doctrines, and struggling and reading, and, as they fancy, praying, morning, noon, and night, to get their own souls saved—who yet, if you are to judge by their conduct, are little better than rogues and heathens; whose only law of life seems to be the fear of what people will say of them; who, like Balaam the son of Bosor, are trying daily to serve the devil without God finding it out, worshipping the evil spirit, as that evil spirit wanted our blessed Lord to do, because they believed his lie, which Christ denied—that the glory of this world be-

longs to the evil one; and then comforting themselves like Balaam their father, in the hope that they shall die the death of the righteous, and their last end be like his.

Now I say my friends that this is a lie, and comes from the father of lies, who tempts every man, as he tempted our Lord, to believe that the power and glory of this world are his, that man's flesh and body, if not his soul, belongs to him. I say, it is no such thing. The world is God's world. Man is God's creature, made in God's image, and not in that of a beast or a devil. The kingdom, the power, and the glory, *are* God's now. You say so every day in the Lord's Prayer —believe it. St. James tells you not to curse men, because they are made in the likeness of God now—not *will be* made in God's likeness after they die. Believe that; do not be afraid of it, strange as it may seem to understand. It is in the Bible, and you profess to believe that what is in the Bible is true. And I say that this suffering of the innocent for the guilty is a proof of that. If man was not made so that the innocent could suffer for the guilty, he could not have been redeemed at all, for there would have been no use or meaning in Christ's dying for us, the just for the unjust. And more, if the innocent could not suffer for the guilty we should be like the beasts that perish.

Now, why? Because just in proportion as any creature is low—I mean in the scale of life—just in that proportion it does without its fellow-creatures, it lives by itself and cares for no other of its kind. A vegetable is a meaner thing than an animal, and one great sign of its being meaner is, that vegetables cannot do each other any good—cannot help each other—cannot even hurt each other, except in a mere mechanical way, by overgrowing each other or robbing each

other's roots; but what would it matter to a tree if all the other trees in the world were to die? So with wild animals. What matters it to a bird or a beast, whether other birds and beasts are ill off or well off, wise or stupid? Each one takes care of itself—each one shifts for itself. But you will say: "Bees help each other and depend upon each other for life and death." True, and for that very reason we look upon bees as being more wise and more wonderful than almost any animals, just because they are so much like us human beings in depending on each other. You will say again, that among dogs, a riotous hound will lead a whole pack wrong—a staunch and well-broken hound will keep a whole pack right; and that dogs do depend upon each other in very wonderful ways. Most true, but that only proves more completely what I want to get at. It is the *tame* dog, which man has taken and broken in, and made to partake more or less of man's wisdom and cunning, who depends on his fellow-dogs. The wild dogs in foreign countries, on the other hand, are just as selfish, living every one for himself, as so many foxes might be. And you find this same rule holding as you rise. The more a man is like a wild animal, the more of a *savage* he is, so much more he depends on himself, and not on others—in short, the less civilised he is; for civilised means being a citizen, and learning to live in cities, and to help and depend upon each other. And our common English word "civil" comes from the same root. A man is "civil" who feels that he depends upon his neighbours, and his neighbours on him; that they are his fellow-citizens, and that he owes them a duty and a friendship. And, therefore, a man is truly and sincerely civil, just in proportion as he is civilised; in proportion as he is a good citizen, a good Christian—in one word, a *good man*.

Ay, that is what I want to come to, my friends—that word *man*, and what it means. The law of man's life, the constitution and order on which, and on no other, God has made man, is *this*—to depend upon his fellow-men, to be their brothers, in flesh and in spirit; for we are brothers to each other. God made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of the earth. The same food will feed us all alike. The same cholera will kill us all alike. And we can give the cholera to each other; we can give each other the infection, not merely by our touch and breath, for diseased beasts can do that, but by housing our families and our tenants badly, feeding them badly, draining the land around them badly. This is the secret of the innocent suffering for the guilty, in pestilences, and famines, and disorders, which are handed down from father to child, that we are all of the same blood. This is the reason why Adam's sin infected our whole race. Adam died, and through him all his children have received a certain property of sinfulness and of dying, just as one bee transmits to all his children and future generations the property of making honey, or a lion transmits to all its future generations the property of being a beast of prey. For by sinning and cutting himself off from God Adam gave way to the lower part of him, his flesh, his animal nature, and therefore he died as other animals do. And we his children, who all of us give way to our flesh, to our animal nature, every hour, alas! we die too. And in proportion as we give way to our animal natures we are liable to die; and the less we give way to our animal natures, the less we are liable to die. We have all sinned; we have all become fleshly animal creatures more or less; and therefore we must all die sooner or later. But in proportion as we become Christians, in proportion as we become civilised, in short, in propor-

tion as we become true men, and conquer and keep in order this flesh of ours, and this earth around us, by the teaching of God's spirit, as we were meant to do, just so far will length of life increase and population increase. For while people are savages, that is, while they give themselves up utterly to their own fleshly lusts, and become mere animals like the wild Indians, they cannot increase in number. They are exposed, by their own lusts and ignorance and laziness, to every sort of disease; they turn themselves into beasts of prey, and are continually fighting and destroying each other, so that they seldom or never increase in numbers, and by war, drunkenness, smallpox, fevers, and other diseases too horrible to mention, the fruit of their own lusts, whole tribes of them are swept utterly off the face of the earth. And why? They are like the beasts, and like the beasts they perish. Whereas, just in proportion as any nation lives according to the spirit and not according to the flesh; in proportion as it conquers its own fleshly appetites which tempt it to mere laziness, pleasure, and ignorance, and lives according to the spirit in industry, cleanliness, chaste marriage, and knowledge, earthly and heavenly, the length of life and the number of the population begin to increase at once, just as they are doing, thank God! in England now; because Englishmen are learning more and more that this earth is God's earth, and that He works it by righteous and infallible laws, and has put them on it to till it and subdue it; that civilisation and industry are the cause of Christ and of God; and that without them His kingdom will *not* come, neither will His will be done on earth.

But now comes a very important question. The beasts are none the worse for giving way to their flesh and being mere animals. They increase and multiply.

and are happy enough; whereas men, if they give way to their flesh and become animals, become fewer and weaker, and stupider, and viler, and more miserable, generation after generation. Why? Because the animals are meant to be animals, and men are not. Men are meant to be men, and conquer their animal nature by the strength which God gives to their spirits. And as long as they do not do so; as long as they remain savage, sottish, ignorant, they are living in a lie, in a diseased wrong state, just as God did *not* mean them to live; and therefore they perish; therefore these fevers, and agues, and choleras, war, starvation, tyranny, and all the ills which flesh is heir to, crush them down. Therefore they are at the mercy of the earth beneath their feet, and the skies above their head; at the mercy of rain and cold; at the mercy of each other's selfishness, laziness, stupidity, cruelty; in short, at the mercy of the brute material earth, and their own fleshly lusts and the fleshly lusts of others, because they love to walk after the flesh and not after the spirit—because they like the likeness of the old Adam who is of the earth earthy, better than that of the new Adam who is the Lord from heaven—because they like to be animals, when Christ has made them in his own image, and redeemed them with His own blood, and taught them with His own example, and made them men. He who will be a man, let him believe that he is redeemed by Christ, and must be like Christ in everything he says and does. If he would carry that out, if he would live perfectly by faith in God, if he would do God's will utterly and in all things he would soon find that those glorious old words still stood true: "Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow by night, nor of the pestilence which walketh in the noonday; a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten

thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee." For such a man would know how to defend himself against evil; God would teach him not only to defend himself, but to defend those around him. He would be like his Lord and Master, a fountain of wisdom and healing and safety to all his neighbours. We might any one of us be that. It is everyone's fault more or less that he is not. Each of us who is educated, civilised, converted to the knowledge and love of God, it is his sin and shame that he is *not* that. Above all, it is the clergyman's sin and shame that he is not. Ay, believe me, when I blame you, I blame myself ten thousand times more. I believe there is many a sin and sorrow from which I might have saved you here, if I had dealt with you more as a man should deal who believes that you and I are brothers, made in the same image of God, redeemed by the same blood of Christ. And I believe that I shall be punished for every neglect of you for which I have been ever guilty. I believe it, and I thank God for it; for I do not see how a clergyman, or anyone else, can learn his duty, except by God's judging him, and punishing him, and setting his sins before his face.

Yes, my friends, it is good for us to be afflicted, good for us to suffer anything that will teach us this great truth, that we are our brother's keepers; that we are all one family, and that where one of the members suffers, all the other members suffer with it; and that if one of the members has cause to rejoice, all the others will have cause to rejoice with it. A blessed thing to know, is that—though whether we know it or not, we shall find it true. If we give way to our animal nature, and try to live as the beasts do, each one caring for his own selfish pleasure—still we shall find out that we cannot do it. We shall find out, as those Liverpool

people did with the Irish widow, that our fellow-men *are* our brothers—that what hurts them will be sure in some strange indirect way to hurt us. Our brothers here have had the fever, and we have escaped; but we have felt the fruits of it, in our purses—in fear, and anxiety, and distress, and trouble—we have found out that they could not have the fever without our suffering for it, more or less. You see we are one family, we men and women; and our relationship will assert itself in spite of our forgetfulness and our selfishness. How much better to claim our brotherhood with each other, and to act upon it—to live as brothers indeed. That would be to make it a blessing, and not a curse; for as I said before, just because it is in our power to injure each other, therefore it is in our power to help each other. God has bound us together for good and for evil, for better for worse. Oh! let it be henceforward in this parish for better, and not for worse. Oh! every one of you, whether you be rich or poor, farmer or labourer, man or woman, do not be ashamed to own yourselves to be brothers and sisters, members of one family, which as it all fell together in the old Adam, so it has all risen together in the new Adam, Jesus Christ. There is no respect of persons with God. We are all equal in His sight. He knows no difference among men, except the difference which God's Spirit gives, in proportion as a man listens to the teaching of that Spirit—rank in godliness and true manhood. Oh! believe that—believe that because you owe an infinite debt to Christ and to God—His Father and your Father—therefore you owe an infinite debt to your neighbours, members of Christ and children of God just as you are—a debt of love, help, care, which you *can* pay, just because you are members of one family; for because you are members of one family, for that

very reason every good deed you do for a neighbour does not stop with that neighbour, but goes on breeding and spreading, and growing and growing, for aught we know, for ever. Just as each selfish act we do, each bitter word we speak, each foul example we set, may go on spreading from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, from parent to child, till we may injure generations yet unborn; so each noble and self-sacrificing deed we do, each wise and loving word we speak, each example we set of industry and courage, of faith in God and care for men, may and will spread on from heart to heart, and mouth to mouth, and teach others to do and be the like; till people miles away, who never heard of our names, may have cause to bless us for ever and ever. This is one and only one of the glorious fruits of our being one family. This is one and only one of the reasons which make me say that it was a good thing mankind was so made that the innocent suffer for the guilty. For just as the innocent are injured by the guilty in this world, even so are the guilty preserved, and converted, and brought back again by the innocent. Just as the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, so is the righteousness of the fathers a blessing to the children; else, says St. Paul, our children would be unclean, but now they are holy. For the promises of God are not only to us, but to our children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call. And thus each generation, by growing in virtue and wisdom and the knowledge of God, will help forward all the generations which follow it to fuller light and peace and safety; and each parent in trying to live like a Christian man himself, will make it easier for his children to live like Christians after him. And this rule applies even in the things which we are too apt to fancy unimportant—every

house kept really clean, every family brought up in habits of neatness and order, every acre of foul land drained, every new improvement in agriculture and manufactures or medicine, is a clear gain to all mankind, a good example set which is sure sooner or later to find followers, perhaps among generations yet unborn, and in countries of which we never heard the name.

Was I not right then in saying that this earth is not the devil's earth at all, but a right good earth, of God's making and ruling, wherein no good deed will perish fruitless, but every man's works will follow him —a right good earth, governed by a righteous Father, who, as the psalm says "is merciful," just "because He rewards every man according to his work."

XVI.

ON THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING.

(Nov. 15th, 1849.)

God hath visited his people.—LUKE vii. 16.

WE are assembled this day to thank God solemnly for the passing away of the cholera from England; and we must surely not forget to thank Him at the same time for the passing away of the fever, which has caused so much expense, sorrow, and death among us. Now I wish to say a very few words to you on this same matter, to show you not only *how* to be thankful to God, but what to be thankful for. You may say: It is easy enough for us to know what to thank God for in this case. We come to thank Him, as we have just said in the public prayers, for having withdrawn this heavy visitation from us. If so, my friends, what we shall thank Him for depends on what we mean by talking of a visitation from God.

Now I do not know what people may think in this parish, but I suspect that very many all over England do *not* know what to thank God for just now; and are altogether thanking him for the wrong thing—for a thing which, very happily for them, He has *not* done for them, and which, if He had done it for them, would have been worse for them than all the evil which ever happened to them from their youth up until now. To

be plain then, many, I am afraid, are thanking God for having gone away and left them. While the cholera was here, they said that God was visiting them; and now that the cholera is over, they consider that God's visit is over too, and are joyful and light of heart thereat. If God's visit is over, my friends, and He is gone away from us; if He is not just as near us now as He was in the height of the cholera, the best thing we can do is to turn to Him with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, and roll ourselves in the dust, and instead of thanking our Father for going away, pray to Him, of his infinite mercy, to condescend to come back again and visit us, even though, as superstitious and ignorant men believe, God's visiting us were sure to bring cholera, or plague, or pestilence, or famine, or some other misery. For I read, that in His presence is life and not death—at His right hand is fulness of joy, and not tribulation and mourning and woe; but if not, it were better to be with God in everlasting agony, than to be in everlasting happiness without God.

Here is a strange confusion—people talking one moment like St. Paul himself, desiring to be with Christ and God for ever, and then in the same breath talking like the Gadarenes of old, when, after Christ had visited them, and judged their sins by driving their unlawful herd of swine into the sea, they answered by beseeching Him to depart out of their coasts.

Why is this confusion?—Because people do not take the trouble to read their Bibles; because they bring their own loose, careless, cant notions with them when they open their Bibles, and settle beforehand what the Bible is to tell them, and then pick and twist texts till they make them mean just what they like and no more. There is no folly, or filth, or

tyranny, or blasphemy, which men have not defended out of the Bible by twisting it in this way. The Bible is better written than that, my friends. He that runs may read, if he has sense to read. The wayfaring man, though simple, shall make no such mistake therein, if he has God's Spirit in him—the spirit of faith, which believes that the Bible is God's message to men—the humble spirit, which is willing to listen to that message, however strange or new it may seem to him—the earnest spirit, which reads the Bible really to know what a man shall do to be saved. Look at your Bibles thus, my friends, about this matter. Read all the texts which speak of God's visiting and God's visitation, and you will find all the confusion and strangeness vanish away. For see! The Bible talks of the Lord visiting people in His wrath—visiting them for their sins—visiting them with sore plagues and punishments, about forty times. But the Bible speaks very nearly as often of God's visiting people to bring them blessings and not punishments. The Bible says God visited Sarah and Hannah to give them what they most desired—children. God visited the people of Israel in Egypt to deliver them out of slavery. In the book of Ruth we read how the Lord visited His people in giving them bread. The Psalmist, in the captivity at Babylon, *prays* God to visit him with His salvation. The prophet Jeremiah says that it was a sign of God's anger against the Jews that He had *not* visited them; and the prophets promised again and again to their countrymen, how, after their seventy years' captivity in Babylon, the Lord would visit them, and what for?—To bring them back into their own land with joy, and heap them with every blessing—peace and wealth, freedom and righteousness. So it is in the New Testament too. Zacharias praised God:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people; through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us." And that was the reason why I chose Luke vii. 16, for my text—only because it is an example of the same thing. The people, it says, praised God, saying: "A great Prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited His people." And in the 14th of Acts we read how God visited the Gentiles, not to punish them, but to take out of them a people for His name, namely, Cornelius and his household. And lastly, St. Peter tells Christian people to glorify God in the day of visitation, as I tell you now—whether His visitation comes in the shape of cholera, or fever, or agricultural distress; or whether it comes in the shape of sanitary reform, and plenty of work, and activity in commerce; whether it seems to you good or evil, glorify God for it. Thank Him for it. Bless Him for it. Whether His visitation brings joy or sorrow, it surely brings a blessing with it. Whether God visits in wrath or in love, still God visits. God shows that He lives; God shows us that He has not forgotten us; God shows us that He is near us. Christ shows us that His words are true: "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

That is a hard lesson to learn and practise, though not a very difficult one to understand. I will try now to make you understand it—God alone can teach you to practise it. I pray and hope, and I believe [redacted] He will—that these very hard times are meant to teach people *really* to believe in God and Jesus Christ, and that they *will* teach people. God knows we need, and thanks be to Him that He *does* know that we need, to be taught to believe in Him. Nothing shows it to me more plainly than the way we talk about God's visita-

tions, as if God was usually away from us, and came to us only just now and then—only on extraordinary occasions. People have gross, heathen, fleshly, materialist notions of God's visitations, as if He was some great earthly king who now and then made a journey about his dominions from place to place, rewarding some and punishing others. God is not in any place, my friends. God is a Spirit. The heaven and the heaven of heavens could not contain Him if He wanted a place to be in, as, glory be to His name, He does not. If He is near us or far from us, it is not that He is near or far from our bodies, as the Queen might be nearer to us in London than in Scotland, which is most people's notion of God's nearness. He is near, not our bodies, but our spirits, our souls, our hearts, our thoughts—as it is written, "The kingdom of God is *within* you." Do not fancy that when the cholera was in India, God was nearer India than He was to England, and that as the cholera crawled nearer and nearer, God came nearer and nearer too; and that now the cholera is gone away somewhere or other, God is gone away somewhere or other too, to leave us to our own inventions. God forbid a thousand times! As St. Paul says: "He is not far from any one of us." "In Him we live and move and have our being," cholera or none. Do you think Christ, the King of the earth, is gone away either—that while things go on rightly, and governments, and clergy, and people do right, Christ is there then, filling them all with His Spirit and guiding them all to their duty; but that when evil times come, and rulers are idle, and clergy dumb dogs, and the rich tyrannous, and the poor profligate, and men are crying for work and cannot get it, and every man's hand is against his fellow, and no one knows what to do or think; and on earth

is distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for dread of those things which are coming on the earth—do you think that in such times as those, Christ is the least farther off from us than He was at the best of times?—The least farther off from us now than He was from the apostles at the first Whitsuntide? God forbid!—God forbid a thousand times! He has promised Himself, He that is faithful and true, He that will never deny Himself, though men deny Him, and say He is not here, because their eyes are blinded with love of the world, and covetousness and bigotry, and dread lest He, their Master, should come and find them beating the men-servants and maid-servants, and eating and drinking with the drunken in the high places of the earth, and saying: "Tush! God hath forgotten it"—ay, though men have forgotten Him thus, and—worse than thus, yet He hath said it—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Why, evil times are the very times of which Christ used to speak as the "days of the Lord," and the "days of the Son of man." Times when we hear of wars and rumours of wars, and on earth distress of nations with perplexity—what does He tell men to do in them? To go whining about, and say that Christ has left His Church? No! "Then," He says, "when all these things come to pass, then rejoice and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

And yet the Scripture does most certainly speak of the Lord's coming out of His place to visit—of the Son of Man coming, and not coming to men—of His visiting us at one time and not at another. How does that agree with what I have just said? My dear friends, we shall see that it agrees perfectly with what I have said, if we will only just remember that

we are not beasts, but men. It may seem a strange thing to have to remind people of, but it is just what they are always forgetting. My friends, we are not animals, we are not spiders to do nothing but spin, or birds only to build nests for ourselves, much less swine to do nothing but dig after roots and fruits, and get what we can out of the clods of the ground. We are the children of the Most High God; we have immortal souls within us; nay, more, we are our souls: our bodies are our husk—our shell—our clothes—our house—changing day by day, and year by year upon us, one day to drop off us till the Resurrection. But *we* are *our souls*, and when God visits, it is our souls He visits, not merely our bodies. There is the whole secret. People forget God, and therefore they are glad to fancy that He has forgotten them, and has nothing to do with this world of His which they are misusing for their own selfish ends; and then God in His mercy visits them. He knocks at the door of their hearts, saying: "See! I was close to you all the while." He forces them to see Him and to confess that He is there whether they choose or not. God is not away from the world. He is away from people's hearts, because He has given people free wills, and with free wills the power of keeping Him out of their hearts or letting Him in. And when God visits He forces Himself on our attention. He knocks at the door of our hard hearts so loudly and sharply that He forces all to confess that He is there—all who are not utterly reprobate and spiritually dead. In blessings as well as in curses, God knocks at our hearts. By sudden good fortune, as well as by sudden mishap; by a great deliverance from enemies, by an abundant harvest, as well as by famine and pestilence. Therefore this cholera has been a true visitation of

God. The poor had fancied that they might be as dirty, the rich had fancied that they might be as careless, as they chose; in short, that they might break God's laws of cleanliness and brotherly care without His troubling Himself about the matter. And lo! He has visited us; and shown us that He does care about the matter by taking it into His own hands with a vengeance. He who cannot see God's hand in the cholera must be as blind—as blind as who?—as blind as he that cannot see God's hand when there is no cholera; as blind as he who cannot see God's hand in every meal he eats, and every breath he draws; for that man is stone blind—he can be no blinder. The cholera came; everyone ought to see that it did not come by blind chance, but by the will of some wise and righteous Person; for in the first place God gave us fair warning. The cholera came from India at a steady pace. We knew to a month when it would arrive here. And it came, too, by no blind necessity, as if it was forced to take people whether it liked or not. Just as it was in the fever here, so it was in the cholera, "One shall be taken and another left." It took one of a street and left another; took one person in a family and left another: it took the rich man who fancied he was safe, as well as the poor man who did not care whether he was safe or not. The respectable man walking home to his comfortable house, passed by some untrapped drain, and then poisonous gas struck him and he died. The rich physician who had been curing others, could not save himself from the poison of the crowded graveyard which had been allowed to remain at the back of his house. By all sorts of strange and unfathomable judgments the cholera showed itself to be working, not by a blind necessity, but at the will of a thinking

Person, of a living God, whose ways are not as our own ways, and His paths are in the great deep. And yet the cholera showed—and this is what I want to make you feel—that it was working at the will of the same God in whom we live and move and have our being, who sends the food we eat, the water in which we wash, the air we breathe, and who has ordained for all these things natural laws, according to which they work, and which He never breaks, nor allows us to break them. For every case of cholera could be traced to some breaking of these laws—foul air—foul food—foul water, or careless and dirty contact with infected persons; so that by this God showed that He and not chance ruled the world, and that he was indeed the living and willing God. He showed at the same time that He was the wise God of order and of law; and that gas and earth, wind and vapour, fulfil His word, without His having to break His laws, or visit us by moving, as people fancy, out of a Heaven where He was, down to an earth, where He was not.

But, lastly, remember what I told you before, that the cholera being a visitation means that God, by it, has been visiting our hearts, knocking loudly at them that He may awaken us, and teach us a lesson. And be sure that in the cholera, and this our own parish fever, there is a lesson for each and every one of us if we will learn it. To the simple poor man, first and foremost, God means by the cholera to teach the simple lesson of cleanliness; to the house-owner He means to teach that each man is his brother's keeper, and responsible for his property not being a nest of disease; to rulers it is intended to teach the lesson that God's laws cannot be put off to suit their laziness, cowardice, or party squabbles. But beside that, to each person, be sure such a visitation as this brings some

private lesson. Perhaps it has taught many a widow that she has a Friend stronger and more loving than even the husband whom she has lost by the pestilence —the God of the widow and the fatherless. Perhaps it has taught many a strong man not to trust in his strength and his youth, but in the God who gave them to him. Perhaps it has taught many a man, too, who has expected public authorities to do everything for him, "not to put his trust in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them," but to hear God's advice, "Help thyself and God will help thee." Perhaps it has stirred up many a benevolent man to find out fresh means for rooting out the miseries of society. Perhaps it has taught many a philosopher new deep truths about the laws of God's world, which may enable him to enlighten and comfort ages yet unborn. Perhaps it has awakened many a slumbering heart, and brought many a careless sinner (for the first time in his life) face to face with God and his own sins. God's judgments are manifold; they are meant to work in different ways on different hearts. But oh! believe and be sure that they are meant to work upon all hearts—that they are not the punishments of a capricious tyrant, but the rod of a loving Father, who is trying to drive us home into His fold, when gentle entreaties and kind deeds have failed to allure us home. Oh my friends! if you wish really to thank God for having preserved you from these pestilences, show your thankfulness by learning the lesson which they bring. God's love has spoken of each and every one of us in the cholera. Be sure He has spoken so harshly only because a gentler tone of voice would have had no effect upon us. Thank Him for His severity. Thank Him for the cholera, the fever. Thank Him for anything which will awaken

us to hear the Word of the Lord. But till you have learnt the lessons which these visitations are meant to teach you, there is no use thanking Him for taking them away. And therefore I beseech you solemnly, each and all, before you leave this church, now to pray to God to show you what lesson He means to teach you by this past awful visitation, and also by sparing you and me who are here present, not merely from cholera and fever, but from a thousand mishaps and evils, which we have deserved, and from which only His goodness has kept us. Oh may God stir up your hearts to ask advice of Him this day! and may He in His great mercy so teach us all His will on this day of joy, that we may not need to have it taught us hereafter on some day of sorrow.

XVII.

THE COVENANT.

The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his own possession. For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places.—PSALM CXXXV. 4, 5, 6.

WERE you ever puzzled to find out why the Psalms are read every Sunday in Church, more read, indeed, than any other part of the Bible? If any of you say, No, I shall not think you the wiser. It is very easy not to be puzzled with a deep matter, if one never thinks about it at all. But when a man sets his mind to work seriously, to try to understand what he hears and sees around him, then he will be puzzled, and no shame to him; for he will find things every day of his life which will require years of thought to understand, ay, things which, though we see and know that they are true, and can use and profit by them, we can never understand at all, at least in this life.

But I do not think that God meant it to be so with these Psalms. He meant the Bible for a poor man's book: and therefore the men who wrote the Bible were almost all of them poor men, at least at one time or other of their life; and therefore we may expect that they would write as poor men would write, and such things as poor men may understand, if they are fairly and simply explained. Therefore I

do not think you need be puzzled long to find out why these Psalms are read every Sunday. For the men who wrote them had God's spirit with them; and God's spirit is the spirit in which God made and governs this world, and just as God cannot change, so God's spirit cannot change; and therefore the rules and laws according to which the world runs on cannot change; and therefore these rules about God's government of the world, which God's spirit taught the old Hebrew Psalmists, are the very same rules by which He governs it now; and therefore all the rules in these Psalms, making allowance for the difference of circumstances, have just as much to do with France, and Germany, and England now, as they had with the Jews, and the Canaanites, and the Babylonians then.

St. Paul tells us so. He tells us that all that happened to the old Jews was written as an example to Christians, to the intent that they might not sin as the Jews did, and so (God's laws and ways being the same now as then) be punished as the Jews were. Moreover, St. Paul says, that Christians now are just as much God's chosen people as the Jews were. God told the Jews that they were to be a nation of kings and priests to Him. And St. John opens the Revelations by saying: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory." St. Paul tells the Ephesians, who had not a drop of Jewish blood in their veins, that through Jesus Christ both Jews and Gentiles had "access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, therefore," he goes on, "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." In fact, he tells the Christians of every country

to which he writes, that all the promises which God made to the Jews belonged to them just as much, that there was no more any difference between Jew and Gentile, that the Lord Jesus Christ was just as really among them, and with them, ruling and helping each people in their own country, as He was in Jerusalem when Isaiah saw His glory filling the Temple, and when Zion was called the place of His inheritance. Indeed, the Lord Jesus said the same thing Himself, for He said that all power was given to Him in heaven and earth; that He was with His churches (that is, with all companies of Christian people, such as England) even to the end of the world; that wherever two or three were gathered together in His name, He would be in the midst of them; and if those blessed words and good news be true, we Englishmen have a right to believe firmly that we belong to Him just as much as the old Jews did; and when we read these Psalms, to take every word of their good news—and their warnings also—to ourselves, and to our own land of England. And when we read in the text, that the Lord chose Jacob unto Himself and Israel for His own possession, we have a right to say: "And the Lord has chosen also England unto himself, and this favoured land of Britain for his own possession." When we say in the Psalm: "The Lord did what He pleased in heaven, and earth, and sea," to educate and deliver the people of the Jews, we have a right to say just as boldly: "And so He has done for England, for us, and for our forefathers."

This then is the reason, the chief reason, why these Psalms are appointed to be read every Sunday in church, and every morning and evening where there is daily service—to teach us that the Lord takes care not only of one man's soul here, and another woman's

soul there, but of the whole country of England; of its wars and its peace; of its laws and government, its progress and its afflictions; of all, in short, that happens to it as a nation, as one body of men, which it is. It must be so, my good friends, else we should be worse off than the old Jews, and not better off, as all the New Testament solemnly assures us a thousand times over that we are.

For in the covenant which God made with the Jews, and in the strange events, good and bad, which He caused to happen to their nation, not only the great saints among them were taken care of, but all classes, and all characters, good and bad, even those who had not wisdom or spiritual life enough to seek God for themselves, still had their share in the good laws, in the teaching and guiding, and in the national blessings which He sent on the whole nation. They had a chance given them of rising, and improving, and prospering, as the rest of their countrymen rose, and improved, and prospered. And when the Lord came to visit Judæa in flesh and blood, we find that He went on the same method. He did not merely go to such men as Philip and Nathaniel, to the holy and elect ones among the Jews, but to the whole people; to the *lost* sheep, as well as to those who were not lost. He did not part the good from the bad before he healed their sicknesses, and fed them with the loaves and fishes. It was enough for Him that they were Jews, citizens of the Jewish nation. God's promises belonged not to one Jew or another, but to the Jewish nation; and even the ignorant and the sinful had a share in the blessings of the covenant, great or small in proportion as they chose to live as Jews ought, or to forget and deny that they belonged to God's people.

Now, surely the Lord cannot be less merciful now.

than He was then. He cannot care less for poor orphans, and paupers, and wild untaught creatures, in England now, than he cared for them in Judæa of old. And we see that in fact He does not. For as the wealth of England improves, and the laws improve, and the knowledge of God improves, the condition of all sorts of poor creatures improves too, though they had no share in bringing about the good change. But we are all members of one body, from the Queen on her throne to the tramper under the hedge; and as St. Paul says: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and if one member rejoices, all the others" sooner or later "rejoice with it." For we, too, are one of the Lord's nations. He has made us one body, with one common language, common laws, common interest, common religion for all; and what He does for one of us He does for all. He orders all that happens to us; whether it be war or peace, prosperity or dearth, He orders it all; and He orders things so that they shall work for the good, not merely of a few, but of as many as possible—not merely for His elect, but for those who know Him not. As He has been from the beginning, when He heaped blessings on the stiff-necked and backsliding Israelites — as He was when He endured the cross for a world lying not in obedience, but in wickedness; so is He now; the perfect likeness of His father, who is no respecter of persons, but causes "His sun to shine alike on the evil and on the good, and His rain to fall on the just and on the unjust."

But now, there is one thing against which I have to warn you most solemnly, and especially in such days as these. You may believe my words to your own ruin, or to your own salvation. They are "the Gospel," "the good news of the Kingdom of God"

—that is, the good news that God has condescended to become our King, to govern and guide us, to order all things for our good. But as St. Paul says, the Gospel may be a savour of death unto death, as well as a savour of life unto life. And I will tell you now; that you have only to do what the Jews just before the coming of our Lord did, and give way to the same thoughts as they, and then, like them, it were better for you that you had never heard of God, and been like the savages, to whom little or no sin is imputed, because they are all but without law. How is this?

As I said before—take your covenant privileges as the Pharisees took theirs, and they will turn you into devils while you are fancying yourselves God's especial favourites. Now this was what happened to the Pharisees: they could not help knowing that God had shown especial favour to them; and that He had taught them more about God than He had taught the heathen. But instead of feeling all the more humble and thankful for this, and of remembering day and night that because much had been given to them much would be required of them, they thought more about the honour and glory which God had put on them. They forgot what God had declared, namely, that it was not for their own goodness that He had taught them, for that they were in themselves not a whit better than the heathen around them. They forgot that the reason why He taught them was, that they were to do His work on earth, by witnessing for His name, and telling the heathen that God was their Lord, as well as Lord of the Jews. Now David, and the old Psalmists and Prophets, did not forget this. Their cry is: "Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King." "Worship the Son of God, ye kings of the earth, and make your peace with Him lest He

be angry." "It was in vain," he told the heathen kings, "to try to cast away God's government from them, and break His bonds from off them," for "the Lord was King, let the nations be never so unquiet."

But the Jews gradually forgot this, and their daily boast was, that God had nothing to do with the heathen; that He did not care for them, and actually hated them; that they, as it were, had the true God all to themselves for their own private property; and that He had neither love nor mercy, except for them and their proselytes, that is, the few heathens whom they could persuade and entice not to worship the true God after the customs of their own country—that would not have suited the Jews' bigotry and pride—but to turn Jews, and forget their own people among whom they were born, and ape them in everything. And so, as our Lord told them, after compassing sea and land to make one of these proselytes, they only made him after all twice as much the child of hell as themselves. For they could not teach the heathen anything worth knowing about God, when they had forgotten themselves what God was like. They could tell them that there was one God, and not two—but what was the use of that? As St. James says, the devils believe as much as that, and yet the knowledge does not make them holy, but only increases their fear and despair. And so with these Pharisees. They had forgotten that God was love. They had forgotten that God was merciful. They had forgotten that God was just. And therefore, while they were talking of God and pretending to worship God, they knew nothing of God, and they did not do God's will, and act like God; for (as we find from the Gospels) they were unjust, tyrannous, proud, conceited, covetous themselves; and while they were looking down on

the poor heathens, these very heathens, the Lord told them, would rise up in judgment against them: for they, knowing little, acted up to the light which they had, better than the Pharisees who knew so much. And so it will be with us, my friends, if we fancy that God's great favours to us are a reason for our priding ourselves on them, and despising papists and foreigners instead of remembering that just because God has given us so much, He will require more of us. It is true, we do know more of the Gospel than the papists, how, though they believe in Jesus Christ, worship the Virgin Mary and the Saints, and idols of wood and stone. But if they, who know so little of God's will, yet act faithfully up to what they do know, will they not rise up in judgment against us, who know so much more, if we act worse than they? Instead of despising them, we had better despise ourselves. Instead of fancying that God's love is not over them, and so sinning against God's Holy Spirit by denying and despising the fruits of God's Holy Spirit in them, we had much better, we Protestants, be repenting of our own sins. We had better pray God to open our eyes to our own want of faith, and want of love, and want of honesty, and want of cleanly and chaste lives; lest God in His anger should let us go on in our evil path, till we fall into the deep darkness of mind of the Pharisees of old. For then while we were boasting of England as the most Christian nation in the world, we might become the most unchristian, because the most unlike Christ; the most wanting in love and fellow-feeling, and self-sacrifice, and honour, and justice, and honesty; wanting, in short, in the fruits of the Spirit. And without them there is no use crying: "We are God's chosen people, He Has put His name among us, we alone hate idols, we alone have the pure word of God, and the pure sacra-

ments, and the pure doctrine;" for God may answer us, as he answered the Jews of old: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father: Verily, I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham." . . . "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Oh! my friends, let us pray, one and all, that God will come and help us, and with great might succour us, "that whereas through our sins and wickedness we are sore let and hindered in running the race set before us, God's bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us," and enable us to live faithfully up to the glorious privileges which He has bestowed on us, in calling us "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven;" in giving us His Bible, in allowing us to be born into this favoured land of England, in preserving us to this day, in spite of all that we have thought, and said, and done, unworthy of the name of Christians and Englishmen.

And then we may be certain that God will also fulfil to us the glorious promises which we find in another Psalm: "If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimonies, which I shall learn them, this land shall be my rest for ever. Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein. I will bless her victuals with increase, and satisfy her poor with bread. I will deck her priests with health, and her holy people shall rejoice and sing."

XVIII.

NATIONAL REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

> And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all; that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you. . . . And ye shall know that I am the Lord.—EZEKIEL xx. 32, 33, 38.

A FATHER has two ways of showing his love to his child—by caressing it and by punishing it. His very anger may be a sign of his love, and ought to be. Just because he loves his child, just because the thing he longs most to see is that his child should grow up good, therefore he must be, and ought to be, angry with it when it does wrong. Therefore anger against sin is a part of God's likeness in us; and he who does not hate sin is not like God. For if sin is the worst evil—perhaps the only real evil in the world—and the end of all sin is death and misery, then to indulge people in sin is to show them the very worst of cruelty.

To sit by and see iniquity going on without trying to stop it, is mere laziness. The parent, when his child does wrong, does not show his love to the child by indulging it, all he shows is, that he himself is carnal and fleshly; that he does not like to take the trouble of punishing it, or does not like to give himself the pain of punishing it; that, in short, he had sooner let his child grow up in bad habits, which must lead

to its misery and ruin for years and years, if not for ever, than make himself uncomfortable by seeing it uncomfortable for a few minutes. That is not love, but selfishness. True love is as determined to punish the sin as it is to forgive the sinner. Therefore, St. Paul tells us, that we can be angry without sinning; that is that there is an anger which comes from hatred of sin and love to the sinner. Therefore, Solomon tells us to punish our children when they do wrong, and not to hold our hands for their crying. It is better for them that they should cry a little now, than have long years of shame and sorrow hereafter. Therefore, in all countries which are properly governed, the law punishes in the name of God those who break the laws of God, and punishes them even with death, for certain crimes; because it is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

And this is God's way of dealing with each and every one of us. This is God's way of dealing with Christian nations, just as it was His way of dealing with the Jews of old. He never allowed the Jews to prosper in sin. He punished them at once, and sternly, whenever they rebelled against Him; not because He hated them, but because He loved them. His love to them showed itself whenever they went well with Him, in triumphs and blessings; and when they rebelled against Him, and broke His laws, He showed that very same love to them in plague, and war, and famine, and a mighty hand, and fury poured out. His love had not changed—they had changed; and now the best and only way of showing His love to them, was by making them feel His anger; and the best and only way of being merciful to them, was to show them no indulgence.

Now the wish of the Jews all along, and especially

in Ezekiel's time, was to be like the heathen—like the nations round them. They said to themselves: "These heathen worship idols, and yet prosper very well. Their having gods of wood and stone, and their indulging their passions, and being profligate and filthy, covetous, unjust, and tyrannical, does not prevent their being just as happy as we are—ay, and a great deal happier. They have no strict law of Moses, as we have threatening us and keeping us in awe, and making us uncomfortable, and telling us at every turn, 'Thou shalt not do this pleasant thing, and thou shalt not do that pleasant thing.' And yet God does not punish them, as Moses' law says He will punish us. These Assyrians and Babylonians above all—they are stronger than we, and richer, and better clothed, and cleverer; they have horses and chariots, and all sorts of luxuries and comforts which we Jews cannot get. Instead of being like us, in continual trouble from earthquakes, and drought, and famine, and war, attacked, plundered by all the nations round us, one after another, they go on conquering, and spreading, and succeeding in all they lay their hand to. Look at Babylon," said these foolish Jews, perhaps, to themselves; "a few generations ago it was nothing of a city, and now it is the greatest, richest, and strongest nation in the whole world. God has not punished it for worshipping gods of wood and stone, why should He punish us? These Babylonians have prospered well enough with their gods, why should not we? Perhaps it is these very gods of wood and stone who have helped them to become so great. Why should they not help us? We will worship them, then, and pray to them. We will not give up worshipping our own God, of course, lest we should offend Him; but we will worship Him and the Babylonian idols at the

same time; then we shall be sure to be right if we have Jehovah and the idols both on our side." So said the Jews to themselves. But what did Ezekiel answer them? "Not so, my foolish countrymen," said he, "God will not have it so. He has taught you that these Babylonian idols are nothing and cannot help you; He has taught you that He can and will help you, that He can and will be everything to you; He has taught you that He alone is God, who made heaven and earth, who orders all things therein, who alone gives any people power to get wealth; and He will not have you go back and fall from that for any appearances or arguments whatsoever, because it is true. He has chosen you to witness to these heathen about Him, to declare His name to them, that they may give up their idols and serve the true God, in whom alone is strength. He chose you to be these heathens' teachers, and He will not let you become their scholars. He meant the heathen to copy you, and He will not let you copy them. If He does, in His love and mercy, let these poor heathen prosper in spite of their idols, what is that to you? It is still the Lord who makes them prosper, and not the idols, whether they know it or not. They know no better, and He will not impute sin to them where He has given them no law. But you do know better; by a thousand mighty signs and wonders and deliverances, the Lord has been teaching you ever since you came up through the Red Sea, that He is all-sufficient for you, that all power is His in heaven and earth. He has promised to you, and sworn to you by Himself, that if you keep His law and walk in His commandments, you shall want no manner of good thing; that you shall have no cause to envy these heathen their riches and prosperity, for the Lord will bless you in house and land, by day and night, at home and

abroad, with every blessing that a nation can desire. Moses' law tells you this, God's prophets have been telling you this, God's wonderful dealings with you have been telling you this, that the Lord God is enough for you. And if you, who are meant to be a nation of kings and priests to God, to teach all nations and serve solely Him, fancy that you will be allowed to throw away the high honour which God has put upon you, and lower yourselves to the follies and sins of these heathen round you, you are mistaken. You were meant to be above such folly, you can be above it; and you shall not prosper by serving God and idols at once; you shall not even prosper by serving idols alone. God will visit you with a mighty hand, and with fury poured out, and you shall know that He is the Lord."

Well, my friends, and what has this to do with us? This it has to do with us—that if God taught the Jews about Himself, He has taught us still more. If he has shown signs and wonders of His love, and wrought mightily for the Jews, He has wrought far more mightily for us; for He spared not His own Son, but gave Him freely for us. If He promised to teach the Jews, He has promised still more to teach us; for He has promised His Holy Spirit freely to young and old, rich and poor, to as many as ask Him, to guide us into all truth. If he expected the Jews to set an example to all the nations around, He expects us to do so still more. And if He punished the Jews, and drove them back again by shame, and affliction, and disappointment, whenever they went after other gods, and tried to be like the heathen around, and despised their high calling, and their high privileges, He will punish us, and drive us back again still more fiercely, and still more swiftly. God has called us to be a

nation of Christians, and He will not let us be a nation of heathens. We are longing to do in these days very much as the Jews did of old; we are all too apt to say to ourselves: "Of course we must love God, or He might be angry with us; and besides, how else should we get our souls saved? But the old heathen nations, and a great many nations now, and a great many rich and comfortable people in England now, too, get on very well without God, by just worshipping selfishness, and money, and worldly cunning, and why should not we do the same?—why should we not worship God and Mammon at once, and serve God on Sundays, and the selfish ways of the world all the week? Surely then we should be doubly safe; we should have God and the world on our side both at once."

Now, my friends, God will not allow us to succeed on that plan. We are members of His Church, whose head is Jesus, who gave Himself for sinners; whose members are all brothers of His Church, which is held together by self-sacrifice and fellow-help. If we try to be like the heathens, and fancy that we can succeed by selfishness, and cunning, and covetousness, God will not let us fall from the honour which He has put on us, and trample our blessings under foot. He will bring our plans to nought. Whomsoever he may let prosper in sin, He will not let those who have heard the message prosper in it. Whatever nation He may let become great by covetousness, and selfish competing and struggling of man against man, He will not let England grow great by it. He loves her too well to let her fall so, and cast away her high honour of being a Christian nation. By great and sore afflictions, by bringing our cleverest plans to nothing, He will teach us that we cannot worship God and

Mammon at once; that the sure riches, either for a man or for a nation, are not money, but righteousness love, justice, wisdom; that this new idol of selfish competition which men worship nowadays, and fancy that it is the secret cause of all plenty, and cheapness, and civilisation, has no place in the church of Jesus Christ, who gave up His own life for those who hated Him, and came not to do His own will, but the will of His Father; not to enable men to go to heaven after a life of selfishness here; but by the power of His Spirit —the spirit of love and fellowship to sweep all selfishness off the face of God's good earth. By sore trials and afflictions will God in His mercy teach this to England, and to every man in England who is deluded into fancying that he can serve God, and selfishness at once, till we learn once more, as our forefathers did of old, that He is the Lord. Because we are His children God will chasten us; because He receives us, He will scourge us back to Him; because He has prepared for us things such as eye hath not seen, He will not let us fill our bellies with the husks which the swine eat, and like the dumb beasts, snarl and struggle one against the other for a place at His table, as if it were not wide enough for all His creatures, and for ten times as many more, forgetting that He is the giver, and fancying that we are to be the takers, and spoiling the gift itself in our hurry to snatch it out of our neighbours' hands. In one word, God will not give us false prosperity, as the children of the world, the flesh, and the devil, because he wishes to give us real prosperity as the sons of God, in the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for us.

XIX.

THE DELIVERANCE OF JERUSALEM.

And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and eighty-five thousand: and when they arose in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.—2 KINGS xix. 35.

You heard read in the first lesson last Sunday afternoon, the threats of the king of Assyria against Jerusalem, and his defiance of the true Lord whose temple stood there. In the first lesson for this morning's service, you heard of king Hezekiah's fear and perplexity; of the Lord's answer to him by Isaiah, and of the great and wonderful destruction of the Assyrian army, of which my text tells you. Of course you have a right to ask: "This which happened in a foreign country more than two thousand years ago, what has it to do with us?" And, of course, my preaching about it will be of no use whatsoever, unless I can show you what it has to do with us; what lesson we English here, in the year 1851, are to draw, from the help which God sent the Jews.

But to find out that, we must hear the whole story. Before we can find out why God drove the Assyrians out of Judæa, we must find out, it seems to me, why He sent them, or allowed them to come into Judæa; and to find out that, we must first see how the Jews were behaving in those times, and what sort of state their country was in; and we must find out, too, what sort

of a man this great king of Assyria was, and what sort of thoughts were in his heart.

Now, by the favour of God, we can find out this. You will see, in the first thirty-seven chapters of Isaiah's prophecies, a full account of the ways of the Jews in that time, and the reasons why God allowed so fearful a danger to come upon them. The whole first thirty-five chapters belong to each other, and are, so to speak, a spiritual history of the Jews, and the Assyrians, and all the nations round them, for many years. A spiritual history—that is, not merely a history of what they did, but of what they were, what was in their inmost hearts, and thoughts, and spirits; a spiritual history—that is, not merely of what they thought they were doing, but of what God saw that they were doing—a history of God's mind about them all. Isaiah had God's spirit on him; and so he saw what was going on round him in the same light in which God saw it, and hated it, or praised it, only according as it was good, and according to the good Spirit of God, or bad, and contrary to that Spirit. So Isaiah's history of his own nation, and the nations around him, was very unlike what they would have written for themselves; just as I am afraid he would write a very different history of England now, from what we should write, if we were set to do it. Now what Isaiah thought of the doings of his countrymen, the Jews, I must tell you in another sermon, next Sunday. It will be enough this morning to speak of the king of Assyria.

These kings of Assyria thought themselves the greatest and strongest beings in the world; they thought that their might was right, and that they might conquer, and ravage, and plunder and oppress every country round them for thousands of miles,

without being punished. They thought that they could overcome the true God of Judæa, as they had conquered the empty idols and false gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Iva. But Isaiah saw that they were wrong. He told his countrymen: "These Assyrian kings are strong, but there is a stronger King than they, Jehovah the Lord of all the earth. It is He who sent them to punish nation after nation, Sennacherib is the rod of Jehovah's anger; but he is a fool after all; for all his cunning, for all his armies, he is a fool rushing on his ruin. He may take Tyre, Damascus, Babylon, Egypt itself, and cast their gods into the fire, for they are no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; but let him once try his strength against the real living God; let the axe once begin to boast itself against Him that hews therewith; and he will find out that there is one stronger than he, one who has been using him as a tool, and who will crush him like a moth the moment he rebels. His father destroyed Samaria and her idols, but he shall not destroy Jerusalem. He may ravage Ephraim, and punish the gluttony and drunkenness, and oppression of the great landlords of Bashan; he may bring misery and desolation through the length and breadth of the land: there is reason, and reason but too good for that: but Jerusalem, the place where God's honour dwells, the temple without idols, which is the sign that Jehovah is a living God, against it he shall not cast up a bank, or shoot an arrow into it. "I know," said Isaiah, "what he is saying of himself, this proud king of Assyria: but this is what God says of him, that he is only a puppet, a tool in the hand of God, to punish these wicked nations whom he is conquering one by one, and us Jews among the rest. He, this proud king of Assyria, thinks that he is the

chosen favourite of the sun, and the moon, and the stars, whom, in his folly, he worships as gods. He will find out who is the real Lord of the earth; he will find out that this great world is ruled by that very God of Israel whom he despises. He will find that there is something in this earth, of which he fancies himself lord and master, which is too strong for him, which will obey God, and not him. God rules the earth, and God rules Tophet, and the great fire-kingdoms which boil and blaze for ever in the bowels of the earth, and burst up from time to time in earthquakes and burning mountains; and God has ordained that they shall conquer this proud king of Assyria, though we Jews are too weak and cowardly, and split up into parties by our wickedness, to make a stand against him." . . .

This great eruption or breaking out of burning mountains, which would destroy the king of Assyria's army, was to happen, Isaiah says, close to Jerusalem, nay, it was to shake Jerusalem itself. Jerusalem was to be brought to great misery by everlasting burnings, as well as by being besieged by the Assyrians; and yet the very shaking of the earth and eruption of fire which was nearly to destroy it, was to be the cause of its deliverance. So Isaiah prophesied, and we cannot doubt his words came true. For this may explain to us the way in which the king of Assyria's army was destroyed. The text says, that when they encamped near Jerusalem the messenger of the Lord went out, and slew in one night one hundred and eighty thousand of them, who were all found dead in the morning. How they were killed we cannot exactly tell, most likely by a stream of poisonous vapour, such as often comes forth out of the ground during earthquakes and eruptions of burning mountains, and kills all men and animals who breathe it. That this was the way that

this great army was destroyed, I have little doubt, not only on account of what Isaiah says in his prophecies of God's "sending a blast" upon the king of Assyria, but because it was just like the old lesson which God had been teaching the Jews all along, that the earth and all in it was His property, and obeyed Him. For what could teach them that more strongly than to see that the earthquakes and burning mountains, of all things on earth the most awful and most murderous, the very things against which man has no defence, obeyed God; burst forth when He chose, and did His work as He willed? For man can conquer almost everything in the world except these burning mountains and earthquakes. He can sail over the raging sea in his ships; he can till the most barren soils; he can provide against famine, rain, and cold, ay, against the thunder itself: but the earthquakes alone are too strong for him. Against them no cunning or strength of man is of any use. Without warning, they make the solid ground under his feet heave, and reel, and sink, hurling down whole towns in a moment, and burying the inhabitants under the ruins, as an earthquake did in Italy only a month ago. Or they pour forth streams of fire, clouds of dust, brimstone, and poisonous vapour, destroying for miles around the woods and crops, farms and cities, and burying them deep in ashes, as they have done again and again, both in Italy and Iceland, and in South America, even during the last few years. How can man stand against them? What greater warning or lesson to him than they, that God is stronger than man; that the earth is not man's property, and will not obey him, but only the God who made it? Now that was just what God intended to teach the Jews all along; that the earth and heaven belonged to Him and obeyed Him; that they were not to worship the sun and stars, as the

Assyrians and Canaanites did, nor the earth and the rivers as the Egyptians did: but to worship the God who made sun and stars, earth and rivers, and to put their trust in Him to guide all heaven and earth aright; and to make all things, sun, earth, and weather, ay, and the very burning mountains and earthquakes, work together for good for them if they loved God. Therefore it was that God gave His law to Moses on the burning mountain of Sinai, amid thunders, and lightnings, and earthquakes, to show them that the lightnings and the mountains obeyed Him. Therefore it was that the earthquake opened the ground and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who rebelled against Moses. Therefore it was that God once used an earthquake and eruption to preserve David from his enemies, as we read in the eighteenth Psalm. And all through David's Psalms we find how well he had learnt this great lesson which God had taught him. Again and again we find verses which show that he knew well enough who was the Lord of all the earth.

In Isaiah's time, it seems, God taught the Jews once more the same thing. He taught them, and the proud king of Assyria, once and for all, that He was indeed the Lord—Lord of all nations, and King of kings, and also Lord of the earth, and all that therein is. He taught it to the poor oppressed Jews by that miraculous deliverance. He taught it to the cruel invading king by that miraculous destruction. Just in the height of his glory, after he had conquered almost every nation in the east, and overcome the whole of Judæa, except that one small city of Jerusalem, Sennacherib's great army was swept away, he neither knew how nor why, in a single night, and utterly disheartened and abashed, he returned to his own land; and even there he found that the God of Israel had followed him—that the idols whom he worshipped

could not save him from the wrath of that God to whom Assyria, just as much as Jerusalem, belonged. For as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, his two sons smote him with the sword, and there was an end of all his pride and conquests. . . . Now Nisroch was the name of a star—the star which we call the planet Saturn; and the Assyrians fancied in their folly, that whosoever worshipped any particular star, that star would protect and help him. . . . But, alas for the king of Assyria, there was One above who had made the stars, and from whose vengeance the stars could not save him; and so even while he was worshipping, and praying to, this favourite star of his which could not hear him, he fell dead, a murdered man, and found out too late how true were the great words of Isaiah when he prophesied against him.

Yes, my friends, this is the lesson which the Jews had to learn, and which the king of Assyria had to learn, and which we have to learn also; and which God will, in His great mercy, teach us over and over again by bitter trials whensoever we forget it; that The Lord is King; that He is near us, living for ever, all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving; that those who really trust in Him shall never be confounded; that those who trust in themselves are trying their paltry strength against the God who made heaven and earth, and will surely find out their own weakness, just when they fancy themselves most successful. So it was in Hezekiah's time; so it is now, hard as it may be to us to believe it. The Lord Jehovah, Jesus Christ, who saved Jerusalem from the Assyrians, He still is King, let the earth be never so unquiet. And all men, or governments, or doctrines, or ways of thinking and behaving, which are contrary to His will, or even pretend that they can do without Him, will as surely come to nought as that great and terrible king of Assyria.

Though man be too weak to put them down, Christ is not. Though man neglect to put them down, Christ will not. If man dare not fight on the Lord's side against sin and evil, the Lord's earth will fight for Him. Storm and tempest, blight and famine, earthquakes and burning mountains, will do His work, if nothing else will. As He said Himself, if man stops praising Him, the very stones will cry out, and own Him as their King. Not that the blessed Lord is proud, or selfish, or revengeful; God forbid! He is boundless pity, and love, and mercy. But it is just because He is perfect love and pity that He hates sin, which makes all the misery upon earth. He hates it, and he fights against it for ever; lovingly at first, that He may lead sinners to repentance; for He wills the death of none, but rather that all should come to repentance. But if a man will not turn, He will whet his sword; and then woe to the sinner. Let him be as great as the king of Assyria, he must down. For the Lord will have none guide His world but Himself, because none but He will ever guide it on the right path. Yes—but what a glorious thought, that He will guide it, and us, on that right path. Oh blessed news for all who are in sorrow and perplexity! Whatsoever it is that ails you—and who is there, young or old, rich or poor, who has not their secret ailments at heart?—whatsoever ails you, whatsoever terrifies you, whatsoever tempts you, trust in the same Lord who delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians, and He will deliver you. He will never suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way for you to escape, that you may be able to bear it. This has been His loving way from the beginning, and this will be His way until the day when He wipes away tears from all eyes.

XX.

PROFESSION AND PRACTICE.

Though they say, "The Lord liveth," surely they swear falsely.—JEREMIAH v. 2.

I SPOKE last Sunday morning of the wonderful way in which the Lord delivered the Jews from the Assyrian army, and I promised to try and explain to you this morning, the reason why the Lord allowed the Assyrians to come into Judæa, and ravage the whole country except the one small city of Jerusalem.

My text is taken from the first lesson, from the book of the prophet Jeremiah. And it, I think, will explain the reason to us.

For though Jeremiah lived more than a hundred years after Isaiah, yet he had much the same message from God to give, and much the same sins round him to rebuke. For the Jews were always, as the Bible calls them, "a backsliding people;" and, as the years ran on, and they began to forget their great deliverance from the Assyrians, they slid back into the very same wrong state of mind in which they were in Isaiah's time, and for which God punished them by that terrible invasion.

Now, what was this?

One very remarkable thing strikes us at once. That when the Assyrians came into Judæa, the Jews were *not* given up to worshipping false gods. On the contrary, we find, both from the book of Kings and

the book of Chronicles, that a great reform in religion had taken place among them a few years before. Their king Hezekiah, in the very first year of his reign, removed the high places, and cut down the groves (which are said to have been carved idols meant to represent the stars of heaven), and even broke in pieces the brazen serpent which Moses had made, because the Jews had begun to worship it for an idol. He trusted in the Lord God, and obeyed Him, more than any king of Judah. He restored the worship of the true God in the temple, according to the law of Moses, with such pomp and glory as had never been seen since Solomon's time. And not only did he turn to the true God, but his people also. From the account which we find in Chronicles, they seemed to have joined him in the good work. They offered sin-offerings as a token of the wickedness of which they have been guilty, in leaving the true God for idols; and all other kinds of offerings freely and willingly. "And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people that God had prepared the people. Moreover, Hezekiah called all the men in Judæa up to Jerusalem, to keep the passover according to the law of Moses," which they had neglected to do for many years, and the people answered his call and "came, and kept the feast at Jerusalem seven days, with joy and great gladness, offering peace-offerings, and making confession to the God of their fathers." So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests and the Levites arose, and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to the Lord's holy dwelling, even to heaven." And when it was all finished, the people went out of their own accord, and destroyed utterly all the idols, and high-

places, and altars throughout the land, and returned to their houses in peace.

Now does not all this sound very satisfactory and excellent? What better state of mind could people be in? What a wonderful reform, and spread of true religion! The only thing like it, that we know, is the wonderful reform and spread of religion in England in the last sixty years, after all the ungodliness and wickedness that went on from the year 1660 to the time of the French war; the building of churches, the founding of schools, the spread of Bibles, and tracts, and the wonderful increase of gospel preachers, so that every old man will tell you, that religion is talked about and written about now, a thousand times more than when he was a boy. Indeed, unless a man makes a profession of some sort of religion or other, nowadays, he can hardly hope to rise in the world, so religious are we English become.

Now let us hear what Isaiah thought of all that wonderful spread of true religion in his time; and then, perhaps, we may see what he would think of ours now, if he were alive. His opinion is sure to be the right one. His rules can never fail, for he was an inspired prophet, and saw things as they are, as God sees them; and therefore his rules will hold good for ever. Let us see what they were.

The first chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah is called "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah." Now this is one prophecy by itself, in the shape of a poem; for in the old Hebrew it is written in regular verses. The second chapter begins with another heading, and is the beginning of a different poem; so that this first chapter is, as it were, a summing up of all that he is

going to say afterwards; a short account of the state of the Jews for more than forty years. And what is more, this first chapter of Isaiah must have been written in the reign of Hezekiah, in those very religious days of which I was just speaking; for it says that the country was desolate, and Jerusalem alone left. And this never happened during Isaiah's lifetime, till the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, that is, till this great spread of the true religion had been going on for thirteen years. Now what was Isaiah's vision? What did he, being taught by God's Spirit, *see* was God's opinion of these religious Jews? Listen, my friends, and take it solemnly to heart!

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts: and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. . . . How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judg-

ment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water; thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.". . .

Again, I say, my friends, listen to it, and take it solemnly to heart! That is God's opinion of religion, even the truest and soundest in worship and doctrine, when it is without godliness, without holiness; when it goes in hand with injustice, and covetousness, and falsehood, and cheating, and oppression, and neglect of the poor, and keeping company with the wicked, because it is profitable; in short, when it is like too much of the religion which we see around us in the world at this day.

Yes—it was of no use holding to the letter of the law while they forgot its spirit. God had commanded church-going, and woe to those, then or now, who neglect it. Yet the Lord asks, "Who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts?". . . He had commanded the Sabbath-day to be kept holy; and woe to those, then or now, who neglect it. Yet He says, "Your Sabbaths I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." The Lord had appointed feasts: and yet He says that His soul hated them; they were a trouble to Him; He was weary to bear them. The Lord had commanded prayer; and woe to those, then or now, in England, as in Judæa, who neglect to pray. And yet He says: "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not

hear." And why?—He himself condescends to tell them the reason, which they ought to have known for themselves: "Because," He says, "your hands are full of blood." This was the reason why all their religiousness, and orthodoxy, and church-going, and praying, was only disgusting to God; because there was no righteousness with it. Their faith was only a dead, rotten, sham faith, for it brought forth no fruits of justice and love; and their religion was only hypocrisy, for it did not make them holy. No doubt they thought themselves pious and sincere enough; no doubt they thought that they were pleasing God perfectly, and giving Him all that He could fairly ask of them; no doubt they were fiercely offended at Isaiah's message to them; no doubt they could not understand what he meant by calling them a hypocritical nation, a second Sodom and Gomorrah, while they were destroying idols, and keeping the law of Moses, and worshipping God more earnestly than He had been worshipped since Solomon's time. But so it was. That was the message of God to them; that was the vision of Isaiah concerning them; that there was no soundness in the whole of the nation, "from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores"—that is, that the whole heart and conscience, and ways of thinking, were utterly rotten, and abominable in the sight of God, even while they were holding the true doctrines about them, and keeping up the pure worship of Him. This, says the Lord, is not the way to please me. "He hath showed thee, oh man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" To do justly, to love mercy, and then to walk humbly, sure that when you seem to have

done all your duty, you have left only too much of it undone; even as St. Paul felt when he said, that though he knew nothing against himself; though he could not recollect a single thing in which he had failed of his duty to the Corinthians, yet that did not justify him. "For he that judgeth me," he says, "is the Lord." He sees deeper than I can; and He, alas! may take a very different view of my conduct from what I do; and this life of mine, which looks to me, from my ignorance, so spotless and perfect, may be, in His eyes, full of sins, and weakness, and neglects, and shameful follies. "To walk humbly with God." Not to believe that because you read the Bible, and have heard the gospel, and are sharp at finding out false doctrine in preachers, and belong to the Church of England, that therefore you know all about God, and can look down upon poor papists, and heathens, and say: "This people, which knoweth not the law, is accursed: but *we* are enlightened, we understand the whole Bible, we know everything about God's will, and man's duty; and whosoever differs from us, or pretends to teach us anything new about God, must be wrong." Not to do so, my friends, but to believe what St. Paul tells us solemnly, "That if any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know"— to believe that the Great God, and the will of God, and the love of God, and the mystery of Redemption, and the treasures of wisdom which are in His Bible, are, as St. Paul told you, boundless, like a living well, which can never be fathomed, or drawn dry, but fills again with fresh water as fast as you draw from it. That is walking humbly with God; and those who do not do so, but like the Pharisees of old, believe that they have all knowledge, and can understand all the mysteries of the Bible, and go through the world, despising and

cursing all parties but their own—let them beware, lest the Lord be saying of them, as He said of the church of Sardis, of old: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

How is this? What is this strange thing, without which even the true knowledge of doctrine is of no use; which, if a man, or a nation has not, he is poor, and blind, and wretched, and naked in soul, in spite of all his religion? Isaiah will tell us—What did he say to the Jews in his day?

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Do justice to the fatherless, and relieve the widow!" "Do that," says the Lord, "and then your repentance will be sincere. Church building and church going are well—but they are not repentance—churches are not souls. I ask you for your hearts, and you give me fine stones and fine words. I want souls—I want *your* souls—I want you to turn to me. And what am I? saith the Lord. I am justice, I am love, I am the God of the oppressed, the fatherless, the widow.—That is my character. Turn to justice, turn to love, turn to mercy; long to be made just, and loving, and merciful; see that your sin has been just this, and nothing else, that you have been unjust, unloving, unmerciful. Repent for your neglect and cruelty, and repent in dust and ashes, when you see what wretched hypocrites you really are. And then, my boundless mercy and pardon shall be open to you. As you wish to be to me, so will I be to you; if you wish to become merciful, you shall taste my mercy; if you wish to become loving to others, you shall find that I love you; if you wish to become just, you shall find that I am just, just to deal by you

as you deal by others; faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. And then, all shall be forgiven and forgotten; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Surely, my friends, these things are worth taking to heart; for this is the sin which most destroys all men and nations—high religious profession with an ungodly, covetous, and selfish life. It is the worst and most dangerous of all sins; for it is like a disease which eats out the heart and life without giving pain; so that the sick man never suspects that anything is the matter with him, till he finds himself, to his astonishment, at the point of death. So it was with the Jews, three times in their history. In the time of Isaiah, under King Hezekiah; in the time of Jeremiah, under King Josiah; and last and worst of all, in the time of Jesus Christ. At each of these three times the Jews were high religious professors, and yet at each of these three times they were abominable before God, and on the brink of ruin. In Isaiah's time their eyes seemed to have been opened at last to their own sins. Their fearful danger, and wonderful deliverance from the Assyrians of which you heard last Sunday, seem to have done that for them; as God intended it should. During the latter part of Hezekiah's reign they seemed to have turned to God with their hearts, and not with their lips only; and Isaiah can find no words to express the delight which the blessed change gives him. Nevertheless, they soon fell back again into idolatry; and then there was another outward lip-reformation under the good King Josiah; and Jeremiah had to give them exactly the same warning which Isaiah had given them nearly a hundred years before. But that time, alas! they would not take the warning;

and then all the evil which had been prophesied against them came on them. From hypocritical profession, they fell back again into their old idolatry; their covetousness, selfishness, party-quarrels, and profligate lives made them too weak and rotten to stand against Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, when he attacked them; and Jerusalem was miserably destroyed, the temple burnt, and the Jews carried captives to Babylon. There they repented in bitter sorrow and slavery; and God allowed them after seventy years to return to their own land. Then at first they seemed to be a really converted people, and to be worshipping God in spirit and in truth. They never again fell back into the idolatry of the heathen. So far from it, they became the greatest possible haters of it; they went on keeping the law of God with the utmost possible strictness, even to the day when the Lord Jesus appeared among them. Their religious people, the Scribes and Pharisees, were the most strict, moral, devout people of the whole world. They worshipped the very words and letters of the Bible; their thoughts seemed filled with nothing but God and the service of God: and yet the Lord Jesus told them that they were in a worse state, greater sinners in the sight of God, than they had ever been; that they, who hated idolatry, were filling up the measure of their idolatrous forefathers' iniquity; that the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth was to fall on them; that they were a race of serpents, a generation of vipers; and that even He did not see how they could escape the damnation of hell. And they proved how true His words were, by crucifying the very Lord of whom their much-prized Scriptures bore witness, whom they pretended to worship day and night continually; and received the just reward of their deeds in forty years

of sedition, bloodshed, and misery, which ended by the Romans coming and sweeping the nation of the Jews from off the face of the earth.

So much for profession without practice. So much for true doctrine with dishonest and unholy lives. So much for outward respectability with inward sinfulness. So much for hating idolatry, while all the while men's hearts are far from God!

Oh! my friends, let us all search our hearts carefully in these times of high profession and low practice; lest we be adding our drop of hypocrisy to the great flood of it which now stifles this land of England, and so fall into the same condemnation as the Jews of old, in spite of far nobler examples, brighter and wider light, and more wonderful and bounteous blessings.

XXI.

THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT.

But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men servants and the maid servants, and to eat and drink and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.—LUKE xii. 45, 46.

BUT why with the unbelievers? The man had not disbelieved that he had any Lord at all; he had only believed that his Lord delayed his coming. And why was he to be put with those who do not believe in him at all? This is a very fearful question, friends, for us, when we think how it is the fashion among us now, to believe that our Lord delays His coming.—And surely most of us do believe that? For is it not our notion that, when the Lord Jesus ascended up to heaven, He went away a great distance off, perhaps millions of miles beyond the stars; and that He will not come back again till the last—which, for aught we know, and as we rather expect, may not happen for hundreds or thousands of years to come? Is not that most people's notion, rich as well as poor? And if that is not believing that our Lord delays His coming, what is?

But, you may answer, the Creed says plainly, that He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. Ah! my friends, those great words of the

Creed which you take into your lips every Sunday, mean the very opposite to what most people fancy. They do not say, "The Lord Jesus has left this poor earth to itself and its misery:" but they say, "Lo, He is with you, even to the end of the world." True, He is ascended into heaven. And how far off is heaven?—for so far off is the Lord Jesus, and no farther. Not so far off, my friends, after all, if you knew where to find it. Truly said the great and good poet, now gone home to his reward:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

And if we lose sight of it as we grow up to be men and women, it is not because heaven goes farther off, but because we grow less heavenly. Even now, so close is heaven to us, that any one of us might enter into heaven this moment, without stirring from his seat. One real cry from the depths of your heart—"Father, forgive thy sinful child!"—one real feeling of your own worthlessness, and weakness, and emptiness, and of God's righteousness, and love, and mercy, ready for you—and you are in heaven there and then, as near the feet of the blessed Lord Jesus, as Mary Magdalen was, when she tried to clasp them in the garden. I am serious, my friends; I am not given to talk fine figures of poetry; I am talking sober, straightforward, literal truth. And the Lord sits at God's right hand too? you believe that? Then how far off is God?—for as far off as God is, so far off is the Lord Jesus, and no farther. What says St. Paul? That "God is not far off from any one of us—for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" .... IN Him .... How far off is that? And is not God everywhere, if indeed we can say that He is anywhere? Then the Lord Jesus, who is at God's right

hand, is everywhere also—here, now, with us this day. One would have thought that there was no need to prove that by argument, considering that His own blessed lips told us; "Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the world;" and again: "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And this is the Lord whom people fancy is gone away far above the stars, till the end of time! Oh, my friends, rather bow your heads before Him here this moment. For here He is among us now, listening to every thought of our poor sinful hearts. . . . He is where God is—God *in* whom we live, and move, and have our being—and that is everywhere. Do you wish Him to be any nearer, my friends? Or do you—do you—take care what your hearts answer, for He is watching them—do you in the depth of your hearts wish that He were a little farther off? Does the notion of His being here on this earth, watching and interfering (as we call it nowadays in our atheism) with us and everything, seem unpleasant and burdensome? Is it more comfortable to you to think that He is away far up beyond the stars? Do you feel the lighter and freer for fancying that He will not visit the earth for many a year to come? In short, is it in your *hearts* that you are saying, The Lord delays His coming?

That is a very important question. For mind, a pious man might be, as many a pious man has been in these days, deceived by bad teaching into the notion that Jesus Christ was gone far away. But if he were a truly pious man, if he truly loved the Lord, that would be a painful thought—as I should have fancied, an unbearable thought—to him, when he looked out upon this poor miserable, confused world. He would be crying night and day: "Oh, that thou wouldest

rend the heavens and come down!" He would be in an agony of pity for this poor deserted earth, and of longing for the Saviour of it to come back and save it. He would never have a moment's peace of mind till he had either seen the Lord come back again in His glory, or till he had found out—what I am sure the blessed Lord would teach him as a reward for his love—that it was all a dream and a nightmare, and that the Lord of the earth was in the earth, and close to him, all along; only that his weak eyes were held so that he did not know the Lord and the Lord's works when he saw them.

But that was not the temper of this servant in the Lord's parable. I am afraid it is by no means the temper of many of us nowadays. The servant said *in his heart*, that his master would be long away. It was his heart put the thought into his head. He took to the notion *heartily*, as we say, because he was glad to believe it was true; glad to think that his master would not come to "interfere" with him; and that in the meantime he might be lord and master himself, and treat everyone in the house as if he himself was the owner of it, and tyrannise over his fellow-servants, and enjoy himself in luxury and good living. So says David of the fool: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;" his heart puts that thought into his head. He wishes to believe that there is no God; and when there is a will there is a way; and he soon finds out reasons and arguments enough to prove what he is so very anxious to prove.

Now, my friends, I am afraid that there is not so much difference as people fancy, between the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God," and the fool who says in his heart, "My master delays His coming."—"God has left the world to us, and we must shift for

ourselves in it." The man who likes to be what St. Paul calls "without God in the world," is he so very much wiser than the man who likes to have no God at all? St. James did not think so; for what does he say: "Thou believest that there is one God? Thou doest well—the devils also believe and tremble." They know as much as that; but it does them no good—only increases their fear. "But wilt thou know, oh! vain man, that faith without works," believing without doing, "is dead?" And are not too many, as I said just now, afraid of the thought of God; so afraid of it that they wish to allow the Son of God as little share as possible in the management of this world? Have not too many a belief without works; a mere belief that there is one God and not two, which hardly, from one year's end to another, makes them do one single thing which they would not have done if they had believed that there was no God at all? Fear of the law, fear of the policeman, fear of losing their work or their custom; fear of losing their neighbour's good word—that is what keeps most people from breaking loose. There is not much of the fear of God in that, or the love of God either as far as I can see. They go through life as if they had made a covenant with God, that He should have his own way in the world to come, if He would only let them have their way in this world. Oh! my friends, my friends, do you think God is God of the next world and not of this also? Do you think the kingdom, and the power, and the glory will be His a great many hundreds of years hence, in what you call heaven; and will not see what every page of Scripture tells you, what you yourself say every time you repeat the Lord's Prayer, that the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory are His now, here in this life, and that He has committed all things to His Son

Jesus Christ and given the power into His hand, that He may rule this earth in righteousness now, here, in this life, and conquer back for God one by one, if it be possible, every creature upon earth? So says the Bible—and people profess nowadays to believe their Bibles. My friends, too many, nowadays, while they profess very loudly to believe what the Bible says, only believe what their favourite teachers tell them that the Bible says. If they really read their Bibles for themselves, and took God at His word, there would be less tyrannising of one man over another, less grinding down of men by masters, and of men by each other—for the poor are often very hard on each other in England, now, my friends—very envious and spiteful, and slanderous about each other. They say that dog won't eat dog—yet how many a poor man grudges and supplants his neighbour, and tries to get into his place and beat him down in his wages? And there are those who call themselves learned men, who tell the poor that that is God's will, and the way by which God intends them to prosper. If those men believed their Bibles, they would be repenting in sackcloth and ashes for having preached such a devil's sermon to God's children. If men really read their Bibles, there would be less eating and drinking with the drunken; less idleness and luxury among the rich; less fancying that a man has a right to do what he likes with his own, because all men would know that they were only the Lord's stewards, bound to give an account to him of the good which they had done with what he has lent them. There would be fewer parents fancying that they can tyrannise over their children, bringing them up as heathens for the sake of the few pence they earn; using bad language, and doing shameful things before them, which they dared not do if they recol-

lected that the Lord was looking on; beating and scolding them as if they were brutes or slaves, to save themselves the trouble of teaching them gently what the poor little creatures cannot know without being taught: and most shameful of all, robbing the poor children of their little earnings to spend it themselves in drunkenness. Ah, blessed Lord! if people did but know how near Thou wert to them, all that would vanish out of England, as the night clouds vanish away before the sun!

And He is near, my friends: He is watching; He is governing; He is at hand: and in this life or in the life to come, forget Him as we choose, He will make us know plain enough, and without any doubt whatsoever, that He is the Lord.

He has fulfilled this awful parable of his about the unfaithful servant already; many a time, against many a man, many a great king, and prince, and nation; and he will fulfil it against each and every man, from the nobleman in his castle to the labourer in his cottage, who says in his heart, "My Lord delays his coming," and begins to tyrannise over those who are weaker than himself, and to enjoy himself as he likes, and forget that he is not his own, but bought with the price of Christ's blood, and bound to work for Christ's kingdom and glory.

So he punished the popes of Rome, three hundred years ago. When all the nations in Europe were listening to them and obeying them, and they had put into their hands by God a greater power of doing good than He ever gave to any human being before or since, what did they do? Instead of using their power for Christ, they used it for themselves. Instead of preaching to all nations the good news that Christ the Son of God was their King, they said: "I, the pope,

am your king. Christ is gone far away into heaven, and has committed all power on earth to us; we are Christ's vicars; we are in Christ's place; He has entrusted to our keeping all the treasures of His merits and His grace, and no one can get any blessing from Christ, unless we choose to give it him." So they said in their hearts just what the foolish servant in the parable said: and fancying that they were lords and masters, naturally enough went on to behave as such; to beat the men-servants and maid-servants, that is, to oppress and tyrannise over the bodies and minds and consciences of men, and women too, God knows; and to eat and drink with the drunken, to live in riot and debauchery. But the Lord was not so far off as those foolish popes fancied. And in an hour when they were not aware, He came and cut them asunder. He snatched from them one-half of the nations of Europe, and England among the rest; He punished them by doubt, ignorance, confusion, and utter blindness, and appointed them their portion among the unbelievers in such terrible earnest, that to this very day, to judge by the things which they say and do, it is difficult to persuade ourselves that the popes really believe in any God at all.

So He did, only three years ago, to many kings and princes on the Continent.* They professed to be Christians; but they had forgotten that they were Christ's stewards, that all their power came from Him, and that he had given it them only to use for the good of their subjects. And they too went on saying: "The Lord delays His coming, we are rulers in this world, and God is ruler in the world to come." So they, too, oppressed their subjects, and lived in ease on what they wrung out of the poor wretches below

* In 1848–49.

them. But the Lord was nearer them, too, than they fancied; and all at once—as they were fancying themselves all safe and prosperous, and saying, "We are those who ought to speak, who is Lord over us?"—their fool's paradise crumbled from under their feet. A few paltry mobs of foolish starving people, without weapons, without leaders, without good counsel to guide them, rose against them. And what did they do? They might have crushed down the rebels most of them, in a week, if they had had courage. And in the only country where the rebels were really strong, that is, in Austria, all might have been quiet again at once, if the king had only had the heart to do common justice, and keep his own solemn oaths. But no—the terror of the Lord came upon them. He most truly cut them in sunder. They were every man of a different mind, and none of them in the same mind a day together; they became utterly conscience-stricken, terrified, perplexed, at their wit's end, not having courage or determination to do anything, or even to do nothing, and fled shamefully away one after another, to their everlasting disgrace. And those of them who have got back their power since are showing sadly enough, by their obstinate folly and wickedness, that the Lord has appointed them their portion with the unbelievers, and left them to fill up the measure of their iniquity, and drink deep the cup of wrath which is in His hand, full and mixed for those who forget God.

Oh! my friends, let us lay these things solemnly to heart. Do not fancy that the Lord will punish the wicked great, and forget the wicked small. In His sight there is neither great nor small; all are small enough for Him to crush like the moth; and all are too great to be overlooked, or forgotten by Him, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground.

Again I say, my friends, let us lay His parable to heart. Let us who have property, and station, and education, never forget who has given it us, and for whom we must use it. Let us never forget that to whom much is given, of them will much be required. Let us pray to the Lord daily to write upon our inmost hearts those solemn words: "Who made thee to differ from another; and what hast thou which thou didst not receive?" Let us look on our servants, our labourers, on every human being over whom we have any influence, as weaker brothers whom God has commanded us to help, teach, and guide in body, mind, and spirit, not that we may make them our slaves, but make them free, manful, self-helping, and in due time independent of us and of everyone except God.

And you young people, who have no authority over anyone, but over your own bodies; to whom the Lord has given little or nothing to manage and take care of except your own health and strength—do not let the devil tempt you to believe that that health and strength is your own property, to do what you like with. It belongs to the Lord who died for you, and He will require an account from you how you have used it. Do not let the devil tempt you to believe that the Lord delays His coming to you—that you may do what you like now, in the prime of your years, and that it will be time enough to think about God and religion when God visits you with cares, and sickness, and old age. That is the fancy of too many; but it will surely turn out to be a mistake. Those who misuse their youth, and health, and strength, in tyrannising over those who are weaker than themselves, and laughing at those who are not as clever as themselves, and eating and drinking with the drunken—the Lord will come to them in an hour when they are not aware, and cut them asunder, in some way or other,

by loss of work, or poverty, or sickness, or doubt and confusion, and bitter shame and perplexity of mind; till they find out, poor things, that they have been living like the unbelievers all their youth, without God in the world, while God's love and God's teaching, and God's happiness was ready for them; and have to go back again to their Father and their Lord, and cry: "Father, we have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and are no more worthy to be called Thy children!" Oh, you who have been fancying that the Lord was gone far away, and that you had a right to do what you liked with the powers which He has given you, go back to Him, now at once, and confess that you, and all belonging to you, belong to Him, and ask Him to teach you how to use it aright. Ask Him to teach you how to please Him with it, and not yourselves only. Ask Him to teach you how to do good to all around you, and not merely to do what you like. Ask Him to show you how to do your duty to Him, and to your neighbours, for whom He died on the cross, in that station of life to which He has called you. Ask Him to show you how to use your property, your knowledge, your business, your strength, your health, so that you may be a blessing and a help to those whom He blesses and helps, and who, He wishes, should bless and help each other. Go back to Him at once, my friends. You will not have far to go, seeing that He is now even among us here hearing my clumsy words; and I do hope, and trust, and pray, bringing them home to some of your hearts with that spirit and power of His, which is like a two-edged sword, piercing to the very depths of a man's heart, and showing him how ugly it is—and how noble the Lord will make it, if he will but repent and pray to Him who never cast out any that came to Him.

XXII.

THE WAY TO WEALTH.

Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.—ISAIAH lv. 6, 7.

SOME of you, surely, while the first lesson was being read this morning, must have felt the beauty of it; and if you were thoughtful, perplexed, weary, sad at heart, perhaps you felt that it was more than beautiful—that it was full of comfort. And so it should be full of comfort to you, my friends. God meant it to give you comfort. For though it was written and spoken by a man of like passions with ourselves, it was just as truly written and spoken by God, who made heaven and earth. It is true and everlasting, the message which it brings, and like all true and everlasting words, it is the voice of God who cannot change; who makes no difference between Jew and Gentile, between us in England here, and nations which perished hundreds of years ago.

And what is its message? What was God's word to the old Jews, among all their sin, and sorrow, and labour?

Is it the message of a stern judge, saying: "Pay me that thou owest, to the uttermost farthing; and if you cannot do that, fret and torment yourselves in

shame and terror here on earth, for all your sins, if, possibly, you may chance to change my mind, and find forgiveness at the last day?"

Is it the message of a proud tyrant, saying: "If you are miserable, and fallen, and sinful, what is that to me? I am perfect, blest, contented with myself, alone in my glory, far away beyond the sight of men, beyond the sun and stars—what are you worms of earth to me?"

Or is it the voice of a loving Father, calling to his self-willed children who have gone proudly and boldly away from their Father's house, and thrown off their Father's government, and said in their conceit: "We are men. Do not we know good and evil? Do we not know what is our interest? Cannot we judge for ourselves, and shift for ourselves, and take care of ourselves? Why are we to be barred from pleasant things here, and profitable things there? We will be our own masters."

To self-willed children who have said thus, and done thus in their foolish hearts, and have found all their conceit, and shrewdness, only lead them into sorrow, and perplexity, and distress.—Who have found that with all their cleverness they could not get the very good things for which they left their Father's house; or if they get them, find no enjoyment in them, but only discontent, and shame, and danger, and a sad self-accusing heart—spending their money for that which does not feed them after all, and labouring hard for things which do not satisfy them; always longing for something more—always finding the pleasure, or the profit, or the honour which a little way off looked so fine, looked quite ugly and worthless, when they come up to it and get hold of it—finding all things full of labour; the eye never satisfied with

seeing, or the ear with hearing; the same thing coming over and over again. Each young man starting with gay hopes, as if he were the first man that ever was born, and he was going to do out of hand such fine things as man never did before, and make his own fortune, and set the world to right at once; and then as he grows older, falling into the same weary ruts as his forefathers went dragging on it, every fresh year bringing its own labour and its own sorrow; and dying like them, taking nothing away with him of all he has earned, and crying with his last breath: "That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit?"

To self-willed children, who have tried their own way ever since they were born, they and their fathers before them, and found it go round in a ring and leave them just where they started in heart and soul, and, on their death-beds, in purse and power also—

To such struggling, dissatisfied beings—such as nine-tenths of the men and women on this earth, alas! are still—comes the word of this loving Father:

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters! and he that hath no money, come, buy and eat. Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Why do you fancy that money can give you all you want? Why this labouring and straining after money, as if it was God, as if it made heaven and earth, and all therein? Is money a God? or money's worth? "I am God," saith the Lord, "and beside me there is none else. It is I who give, and not money. It is I who save men, and not money. And I do save, and I do give freely to all. Come, and try my mercy, and see if my word be not true."

This struggling and snarling, like dogs over a bone—what profit comes of it? are you happier? are you wiser? are you better? are you more at peace with your neighbours; more at peace with your own hearts and consciences? If you are, money has not made you so, nor plotting, and scraping, and struggling, and pushing your neighbour down, that you may rise a few inches on his shoulders. No. Hear what the voice of your Father says is the true way to wealth and comfort, after which you all struggle and labour so hard in vain.—"Hearken diligently unto me, and you shall eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies," or rather "the faithful oath which I sware unto David?" And what is this faithful oath which God sware to David.—"Of the fruit of thy body, I will set on thy seat." A promise of a righteous king who should arise in David's family. How far David understood the full meaning of that glorious promise we cannot tell. He thought most probably, at first, that Solomon, his son, was to be the king who would fulfil it. But all through many of his psalms, there are deep and great words about some nobler and more perfect king than Solomon—about one who, as Isaiah says here, would perfectly witness to the people that God was their King; one who would be a perfect leader and commander of the people; a holy one of Israel, who would sit on God's right hand; to hear the good news of whom, the Jews would call nations whom they then did not know of, and for whose sake nations who did not know them would run to them. And dimly David did see this, that God would raise up a true Christ, that is, one truly anointed by God,

chosen and sent out by God, to sit on his throne, and be perfectly what David was only in part; a King made perfect by suffering, a King of poor men, a King who bore the sins and carried the iniquities of all His people, from the highest to the lowest. We know who that was. We know clearly what David only knew dimly, what Isaiah only knew a little more clearly. We know who was born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God, ever praying for us, ruling the world in righteousness, Jesus the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth.

But Isaiah, though he knew Him only dimly, still knew Him. He did not know that the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, would take on Himself the form of a poor man, and be called the son of the carpenter. Such boundless love and condescension in the Son of God he never could have fancied for himself, and God had not chosen to reveal it to him; or to anyone else in those days. But this he did see, that the Lord Jesus, He whom he calls the Holy One of Israel, was near the Jews in his time; that He was watching over them, mourning over their sins, arguing with them, and calling them to return to Him with most human love and tenderness, as a husband to the woman whom he loves in spite of her unfaithfulness to him. As he says to his sinful and distressed country in the chapter before this: "Thy Maker is thy husband: the Lord of Hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, the Lord of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little anger I hid my face from

thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

This, then, Isaiah knew—that the heart of the Holy Lord pitied and yearned after those poor sinful Jews, as a husband's after a foolish and sinful wife. And how much more should we believe the same, how much more should we believe that His heart pities and yearns for all foolish and sinful people here in England now! We who know a thousand times more than Isaiah knew of His love, His pity, His condescension, which led Him to sacrifice Himself upon the cross for us? Surely, surely, if Isaiah had a right to say to those Jews, "Seek the Lord while He may be found," I have a thousand times as much right to say it to you. If Isaiah had a right to say to those Jews, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon," then I have a right to say it to you.

Free mercy, utter pardon, pardon for all, even for the worst. And what is the argument which Isaiah uses to make his countrymen repent? Is it "Repent, or you shall be damned: Repent because God's wrath and curse is against you. The Lord hates you and despises you, and you must crawl to His feet like beaten hounds, and entreat Him not to strike you into hell as He intends"? Not so; it was because God loved the Jews, that they were to repent. It is because God loves you that you must repent. "Incline your ear," saith the Lord, "and come unto me, hear, and your soul shall live; and you shall eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness." Yes, God is love. God's delight and glory is to give; in spite of all our sins He gives and gives, sending rain and fruitful seasons to just and unjust, to fill their hearts with joy

and gladness; and all the while men fancy that it is not God that gives, but they who take. God has not left Himself, as St. Paul says, without a witness; every fruitful shower and quickening gleam of sunshine cries to us—See! God is love: He is the giver. And men will not hear that voice. They say in their hearts, "The Lord is far away above the skies; He does not care for us: we must help ourselves, each man to what he can get off this earth; nay, even, when we are hard put to it for a living, we must break God's laws to keep ourselves alive, and so steal from God's table the very good things which He offers us freely."

But some will say: "He does not give freely; we must work and struggle. Why do you mock poor hard-worked creatures with such words as these?"

Ask that question of God, my friends, and not of me. Isaiah said that those who hearkened to God diligently should eat what is good. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said the same—that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, all other things should be added to them. He did not mean us to be idle, God forbid! but this He meant, that if we, each in his business and calling, put steadily before ourselves what is right, what God would wish us, His subjects, to be in His Kingdom—if instead of making our first thought in every business we take in hand, "What will suit my interest best, what will raise most money, what will give me most pleasure?" we said to ourselves all day long, "What will be most right, and just, and merciful for us to do; what will be most pleasing to a God who is love and justice itself? what will do most good to my neighbour as well as myself?" then all things would go well with us. Then we should be prosperous and joyful. Then our plans would succeed and our labour bring forth real profit to us,

because they would be according to the will of God: we should be fellow-workers with Jesus Christ in the great work of doing good to this poor distracted world, and His help and blessing would be with us.

And if you ask me, how can this come to pass, I must answer, as Isaiah does in this same chapter: "The Lord's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, but higher than ours, as the heavens are above the earth." But if we do turn to God, and repent each man of us of his selfishness, his unfaithfulness, his hard-heartedness, his covetousness, his self-will, his ungodliness—then God's blessing, as Isaiah says, will come down on us, and spring up among us, we know not how or whence, like the rain and snow, which comes down from heaven and waters the earth, and makes it bud and bring forth to give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So shall be the Lord's word, which goes out of His mouth; it will not return to Him void, but will accomplish what He pleases, and prosper in that whereto He sends it. He will teach us and guide us in the right way. He will put His word into the mouths of true teachers to show us our duty. He will pour out His spirit upon us, to make us love our duty. In one way and another, we know not how, we shall be taught what is good for England, good for each parish, good for each family. And wealth, peace, and prosperity for rich and poor will be the fruit of obeying the word of God, and giving up our hearts to be led by His spirit. As it was to be in Judæa, of old, if they repented, so will it be with us. They should go forth with joy and do their work in peace. The hills should break before them into singing, and all the trees of the field should clap their hands; instead of thorns should come up timber-trees: instead of briers, garden-shrubs. The whole cultivation of the

country was to improve, and be to the Lord for a name, and a sign for ever that the true way to wealth and prosperity is the way of God, justice, mercy to each other, and obedience to the will of Him who made heaven and earth, trees and fruitful fields, rain and sunshine, and gives the blessings of them freely to His children of mankind, in proportion as they look up to Him as a loving Father, and return to him day by day, with childlike repentance, and full desire to amend their lives according to His holy word.

XXIII.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

What is the use of sermons?—what is the use of books? Here are hundreds and thousands of people hearing weekly and daily what is right, and how many *do* what is right?—much less *love* what is right? What can be the reason of this, that men should know the better and choose the worse? What motive can one find out?—what reason or argument can one put before people, to make them do their duty? How can one stir them up to conquer themselves; to conquer their own love of pleasure, laziness, cowardice, conceit, above all their own selfishness, and do simply what is right, morning, noon, and night? That is a question worth asking and considering, for there ought to be some use in sermons and in books; and there ought to be some use in every one of us too. Woe to the man who is of no use! The Lord have mercy on his soul; for he needs it! It is, indeed, worth his while to take any trouble which will teach him a motive for being useful; in plain words, stir him up to do his duty, to do his rights; for a man's rights are not, as the world thinks, what is right

others should do to him, but what is right he should do to others. Our duty is our right, the only thing which is right for us. What motive will constrain us, that is, bind us, and force us to do that?

Will self-interest? Will a man do right because you tell him it is his interest, it will pay him to do it? Look round you and see.—The drunkard knows that drinking will ruin him, and yet he gets drunk. The spendthrift knows that extravagance will ruin him, and yet he throws away his money still. The idler knows that he is wasting his only chance for all eternity, and yet he puts the thought out of his head, and goes on idling. The cheat knows that he is in danger of being almost certainly found out sooner or later; he knows too that he is burdening his own conscience with the curse of inward shame and self-contempt; and yet he goes on cheating. The hard master knows, or ought to know (for there is quite enough to prove it to him) that it would pay him better in the long run to be more merciful, and less covetous; that by grinding those whom he employs down to the last farthing, he degrades them till they become burdens on him and curses to him; that what he gains by high prices, he will lose in the long run by bad debts; that what he saves in low wages, he will pay in extra poor-rates; and that even if he does make money out of the flesh and bones of those beneath him, that money ill gotten is sure to be ill spent, that there is a curse on it, that it brings a curse in the gnawing of a man's own conscience, and a curse too in the way it flows away from his family as fast as it flowed to them. "He that by usury and unjust gain increases his wealth, shall gather for him that will pity the poor." So said Solomon of old. And men who worship Mammon find it come true daily, and see that,

taking all things together, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses, and that those who make such haste to be rich, fall, as the apostle says, "into temptation and a snare, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows." Such a man sees his neighbours making money, and making themselves more unhappy, anxious, discontented by it; he sees, in short, that it is not his interest to do nothing but make money and save money: and yet in spite of that, he thinks of nothing else. Self-interest cannot keep him from that sin. I do not believe that self-interest ever kept any man from any *sin*, though it may keep him from many an imprudence. Self-interest may make many a man respectable, but whom did it ever make good? You may as well make house-walls of paper, or take a rush for a walking-stick, as take self-interest to keep you upright, or even prudent. The first shake—and the rush bends, and the paper wall breaks, and a man's selfish prudence is blown to the winds. Let pleasure tempt him, or ambition, or the lust of making money by speculation; let him take a spite against anyone; let him get into a passion; let his pride be hurt; and he will do the maddest things, which he knows to be entirely contrary to his own interest, just to gratify the fancy of the moment. Those who call themselves philosophers, and fancy that men's self-interest, if they can only feel it strong enough, would make all men just and merciful to each other, know as little of human nature as they do of God or the devil.

What *will* make a man to do his duty? Will the hope of heaven? That depends very much upon what you mean by heaven. But what people commonly mean by going to heaven, is—not going to hell. They believe that they must go to either one place or the

other. They would much sooner of course stay on earth for ever, because their treasure is here, and their heart too. But that cannot be, and as they have no wish to go to hell, they take up with heaven instead, by way of making the best of a bad matter.

I ask you solemnly, my friends, each one of you, which would you sooner do,—stay here on earth, or go to heaven? You need not answer *me*. I am afraid many of you would not dare answer me as you really felt, because you would be ashamed of not liking to go to heaven. But answer God. Answer yourselves in the sight of God. When you keep yourselves back from doing a wrong thing, because you know it is wrong, is it for love of heaven, or for mere fear of being punished in hell? Some of you will answer boldly at once: "For neither one nor the other; when we keep from wrong, it is because we hate and despise what is wrong: when we do right it is because it is right and we ought to do it. We can't explain it, but there is something in us which tells us we ought to do right." Very good, my friends, I shall have a word to say to you presently; but in the meantime there are some others who have been saying to themselves: "Well, I know we do right because we are afraid of being punished if we do not do it, but what of that? at all events we get the right thing done, and leave the wrong thing undone, and what more do you want? Why torment us with disagreeable questions as to *why* we do it?"

Now, my friends, to make the matter simpler, I will take you at your words, for the sake of argument. Suppose you do avoid sin from the fear of hell, does that make what you do *right?* Does that make *you* right? Does that make your heart right? It is a great blessing to a man's neighbours, certainly, if he is

kept from doing wrong any how—by the fear of hell, or fear of jail, or fear of shame, or fear of ghosts if you like, or any other cowardly and foolish motive—a great blessing to a man's neighbours: but no blessing, that I can see, to the man himself. He is just the same; his heart is not changed; his heart is no more right in the sight of God, or in the sight of any man of common sense either, than it would be if he did the wrong thing, which he loves and dare not do. You feel that yourselves about other people. You will say "That man has a bad heart, for all his respectable outside. He would be a rogue if he dared, and therefore he *is* a rogue." Just so, I say, my friends, take care lest God should say of you, "He would be a sinner if he dared, and therefore he is a sinner."

How can the hope of heaven, or the fear of hell, make a man do right? The right thing, the true thing for a man, is to be loving, and do loving things; and can fear of hell do that, or hope of heaven either? Can a man make himself affectionate to his children because he fancies he shall be punished if he is not so, and rewarded if he is so? Will the hope of heaven send men out to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, visit the sick, preach the gospel to the poor?—The Papists say it will. I say it will not. I believe that even in those who do these things from hope of heaven and fear of hell, there is some holier, nobler, more spiritual motive, than such everlasting selfishness, such perfect hypocrisy, as to do loving works for others, for the sake of one's own self-love.

What feeling then is there left which will bind a man to do good, not once in a way, but always and habitually? to do good, not only to himself, but to all around him? I know but of one, my friends, and that is Love. There are many sides to love—

admiration, reverence, gratitude, pity, affection—they are all different shapes of that one great spirit of love. Surely all of you have felt its power more or less; how wonderfully it can conquer a man's whole heart, change his whole conduct. For love of a woman; for pity to those in distress; for admiration for anyone who is nobler and wiser than himself; for gratitude to one who has done him kindness; for loyalty to one to whom he feels he owes a service—a man will dare to do things, and suffer things, which no self-interest or fear in the world could have brought him to. Do you not know it yourselves? Is it not fondness for your wives and children, that will make you slave and stint yourselves of pleasure more than any hope of gain could ever do? But there is no one human being, my friends, whom we can meet among us now, for whom we can feel all these different sorts of love? Surely not: and yet there must be One Person somewhere for whom God intends us to feel them all at once; or else He would not have given all these powers to us, and made them all different branches of one great root of love. There must be One Person somewhere, who can call out the whole love in us—all our gratitude; all our pity; all our admiration; all our loyalty; all our brotherly affection. *And there is One,* my friends. One who has done for us more than ever husband or father, wife or brother, can do to call out our gratitude. One who has suffered for us more than the saddest wretch upon this earth can suffer, to call out our pity. One who is nobler, purer, more lovely in character than all others who ever trod this earth, to call out our admiration. One who is wiser, mightier than all rulers and philosophers, to call out all our reverence. One who is tenderer, more gentle, more feeling-hearted, than the kindest woman who ever sat by a sick bed,

to call out all our love. Of whom can I be speaking? Of whom but of Jesus; He who for us stooped out of the heaven of heavens; for us left His eternal glory in the bosom of the Father; for us took upon Him the form of a servant, and was born of a village maiden, and was called the son of a carpenter; for us wandered this earth for thirty years in sorrow and shame; for us gave His back to the scourge, and His face to shameful spitting; for us hung upon the cross and died the death of the felon and the slave. Oh! my friends, if that story will not call out our love, what will? If we cannot admire Christ, whom can we admire? If we cannot be grateful to Christ, to whom can we be grateful? If we cannot pity Christ, whom can we pity? If we cannot feel bound in honour to live for Christ, to work for Christ, to delight in talking of Christ, thinking of Christ, to glory in doing Christ's commandments to the very smallest point, to feel no sacrifice too great, no trouble too petty, if we can please Christ by it and help forward Christ's kingdom upon earth—if we cannot feel bound in honour to do that for Christ, what honour is there in us? Again, I say, if we cannot love Christ, whom can we love? If the remembrance of what He has worked for us will not stir us up to work for Him, what will stir us up?

I say it again, we are bound by every tie, by every feeling that can bind man to man, to devote ourselves to Christ, the Man of all men. I say this is no dream or fancy, it is an actual fact which thousands and hundreds of thousands on this earth have felt. Nothing but love to Christ, nothing but loving Him because He first loved us, can constrain and force a man as with a mighty feeling which he cannot resist, to labour day and night for Christ's sake, and therefore for the

sake of God the Father of Christ. What else do you suppose it was which could have stirred up the apostles —above all, that wise, learned, high-born, prosperous man, St. Paul, to leave house and home, and wander in daily danger of his life? What does St. Paul say himself? "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, and if one died for all then were all dead, and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them." And what else could have kept St. Paul through all that labour and sorrow of his own choosing, of which he speaks in the chapter before?—"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body; for we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

We may say that St. Paul was an exceedingly benevolent man, and *that* made him do it; or that he had found out certain new truths and opinions which delighted him very much, and therefore he did it. But St. Paul gives no such account of himself: and we have no right to take anyone's account but his own. He knew his own heart best. He does not say that he came to preach a scheme of redemption, or opinions about Christ. He says he came to preach nothing but Christ Himself — Christ crucified — to tell people about the Lord he loved, about the Lord who loved him, certain that when they had heard the plain story of Him, their hearts, if they were simple, and true, and loving, would leap up in answer

to his words, and find out, as by instinct, what Christ had done for them, what they were to do for Christ. Ay, I believe, my friends—indeed I am certain—from my own reading, that in every age and country, just in proportion as men have loved Christ personally as a man would love another man, just in that proportion have they loved their neighbours, worked for their neighbours, sacrificed their time, their pleasure, their money, to do good to all, for the sake of Him who commanded: "If ye love *ME*, keep my commandments; and my commandment is this, that ye should love one another as I have loved you." That is the only sure motive. All other motives for doing good or being good, will fail in one case or another case, because they do not take possession of a man's whole heart, but only of some part of his heart. Love—love to Christ, can alone sweep away a man's whole heart and soul with it, and renew it, and transfigure it, and make it strong instead of weak, pure instead of foul, gentle instead of fierce, brave instead of being vain and cowardly, and fearing what everyone will say of him. Only love for Christ, who loved all men unto the death, will make us love all men too: not only one here and there who may agree with us or help us; but those who hate us, those who misunderstand us, those who thwart us, ay, even those who disobey and slight not only us, but Jesus Christ Himself. *That* is the hardest lesson of all to learn; but thousands have learnt it; everyone ought to learn it. In proportion as a man loves Christ, he will learn to love those who do not love Christ. For Christ loves them whether they know it or not; Christ died for them whether they believe it or not; and we must love them because our Saviour loves them.

Oh! my friends, why do so few love Christ?

Why do so few live as those who are not their own, but bought with the price of His precious blood and bound to devote themselves, body and soul, to His cause? Why do so many struggle against their sins, while yet they cannot break off those sins, but go struggling and sinning on, hating their sins and yet unable to break through their sins, like birds beating themselves to death against the wires of their cage? Why? Because they do not know Christ. And how can they know Him, unless they read their Bibles with simple, childlike hearts, determined to let the Bible tell its own story: believing that those who walked with Christ on earth, must know best what He was like? Why? Because they will not ask Christ to come and show Himself to them, and make them see Him, and love Him, and admire Him, whether they will or not. Oh! remember, if Christ be the Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, we cannot go to Him, poor, weak, ignorant creatures as we are. We cannot ascend up into heaven to bring Christ down. He must come down out of His own great love and condescension, and dwell in our hearts as He has promised to do, if we do but love Him. He must come down and show Himself to us. Oh! read your Bibles—read the story of Christ, and if that does not stir up in you some love for Him, you must have hearts of stone, not flesh and blood. And then go to Him; pray to Him, whether you believe in Him altogether or not, upon the mere chance of His being able to hear you and help you. You would not throw away a chance on earth; will you throw away such a chance in heaven as having the Son of God to help you? Oh, cry to Him; say out of the depths of your heart: "Thou most blessed and glorious Being who ever walked this earth, who hast gone blameless

through all sorrow and temptation that man can feel; if Thou dost love anyone, if Thou canst hear anyone, hear me! If thou canst not help me, no one can. I have a hundred puzzling questions which I cannot answer for myself, a hundred temptations which I cannot conquer for myself, a hundred bad habits which I cannot shake off of myself; and they tell me that Thou canst teach me, Thou canst guide me, Thou canst strengthen me, Thou canst take out of my heart this shame and gnawing of an evil conscience. If Thou be the Son of God, make me clean! If it be true that Thou lovest all men, show Thy love to me! If it be true that Thou canst teach all men, teach me! If it be true that Thou canst help all men, help my unbelief, for if Thou dost not, there is no help for me in heaven or earth!" You, who are sinful, distracted, puzzled, broken-hearted, cry to Christ in that way, if you have no better way, and see if He does not hear you. He is not one to break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. He will hear you, for He has heard all who have ever called on Him. Cry to Him from the bottom of your hearts. Tell Him that you do *not* love Him, and that yet you *long* to love Him. And see if you do not find it true that those who come to Christ, He will in no wise cast out. He may not seem to answer you the first time, or the tenth time, or for years; for Christ has His own deep, loving, wise ways of teaching each man, and for each man a different way. But try to learn all you can of Him. Try to know Him. Pray to know, and understand Him, and love Him. And sooner or later you will find His words come true, "If a man love me, I and my Father will come to him, and take up our abode with him." And then you will feel arise in you a hungering and a thirsting

after righteousness, a spirit of love, and a desire of doing good, which will carry you up and on, above all that man can say or do against you—above all the laziness, and wilfulness, and selfishness, and cowardice which dwells in the heart of everyone. You will be able to trample it all under foot for the sake of being good and doing good, in the strength of that one glorious thought, "Christ lived and died for me, and, so help me God, I will live and die for Christ."

XXIV.

DAVID'S VICTORY.

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of armies, the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied.—1 SAMUEL xvii. 45.

WE have been reading to-day the story of David's victory over the Philistine giant, Goliath. Now I think the whole history of David may teach us more about the meaning of the Old Testament, and how it applies to us, than the history of any other single character. David was the great hero of the Jews; the greatest, in spite of great sins and follies, that has ever been among them; in every point the king after God's own heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not disdain to be called especially the Son of David. David was the author, too, of those wonderful psalms which are now in the mouths and the hearts of Christian people all over the world; and will last, as I believe, till the world's end, giving out fresh depths of meaning and spiritual experience.

But to understand David's history, we must go back a little through the lessons which have been read in church the last few Sundays. We find in the eighth and in the twelfth chapters of this same book of Samuel, that the Jews asked Samuel for a king—for a king like the nations round them. Samuel consulted God, and by God's command chose Saul to be their king; at the same time warning them that in asking

for a king they had committed a great and fearful sin, for "the Lord their God was their king." And the Lord said unto Samuel, that in asking for a king they had rejected God from reigning over them. Now what was this sin which the Jews committed? for the mere having a king cannot be wrong in itself; else God would not have anointed Saul and David kings, and blessed David and Solomon; much less would He have allowed the greater number of Christian nations to remain governed by kings unto this day, if a king had been a wrong thing in itself. I think if we look carefully at the words of the story we shall see what this great sin of the Jews was. In the first place, they asked Samuel to give them a king—not God. This was a sin, I think; but it was only the fruit of a deeper sin—a wrong way of looking at the whole question of kings and government. And that deeper sin was this: they were a free people, and they wanted to become slaves. God had made them a free people; He had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, out of slavery to Pharaoh. He had given them a free constitution. He had given them laws to secure safety, and liberty, and equal justice to rich and poor, for themselves, their property, their children; to defend them from oppression, and over-taxation, and all the miseries of misgovernment. And now they were going to trample under foot God's inestimable gift of liberty. They wanted a king like the nations round them, they said. They did not see that it was just their glory *not* to be like the nations round them in that. We who live in a free country do not see the vast and inestimable difference between the Jews and the other nations. The Jews were then, perhaps, so far as I can make out, the only free people on the face of the earth. The nations round them were like the nations

in the East, now governed by tyrants, without law or parliament, at the mercy of the will, the fancy, the lust, the ambition, and the cruelty of their despotic kings. In fact, they were as the Eastern people now are—slaves governed by tyrants. Samuel warned the Jews that it would be just the same with them; that neither their property, their families, nor theirl iberty would be safe under the despots for whom they wished. And yet, in spite of that warning, they would have a king. And why? Because they did not like the trouble of being free. They did not like the responsibility and the labour of taking care of themselves, and asking counsel of God as to how they were to govern themselves. So they were ready to sell themselves to a tyrant, that he might fight for them, and judge for them, and take care of them, while they just ate and drank, and made money, and lived like slaves, careless of what happened to them or their country, provided they could get food, and clothes, and money enough. And as long as they got that, if you will remark, they were utterly careless as to what sort of king they had. They said not one word to Samuel about how much power their king was to have. They made not the slightest inquiry as to whether Saul was wise or foolish, good or bad. They did not ask God's counsel, or trouble themselves about God; so they proved themselves unworthy of being free. They turned, like a dog to his vomit, and the sow to her wallowing in the mire, cowardly back again into slavery; and God gave them what they asked for. He gave them the sort of king they wanted; and bitterly they found out their mistake during several hundred years of continually increasing slavery and misery.

There is a deep lesson for us, my friends, in all this. And that is, that God's gifts are not fit for us,

unless we are more or less fit for them. That to him that makes use of what he has, more shall be given; but from him who does not, will be taken away even what he has. And so even the inestimable gift of freedom is no use unless men have free hearts in them. God sets a man free from his sins by faith in Jesus Christ; but unless that man uses His grace, unless he desires to be free inwardly as well as outwardly—to be free not only from the punishmont of his sins, but from the sins themselves; unless he is willing to accept God's offer of freedom, and go boldly to the throne of grace, and there plead his cause with his heavenly Father face to face, without looking to any priest, or saint, or other third person to plead for him; if, in short, a man has not a free spirit in him, the grace of God will become of no effect in him, and he will receive the spirit of bondage (of slavery, that is), again to fear. Perhaps he will fall back more or less into popery and half-popish superstitions; perhaps, as we see daily round us, he will fall back again into antinomianism, into the slavery of those very sins from which God once delivered him. And just the same is it with a nation. When God has given a nation freedom, then, unless there be a free heart in the people and true independence, which is dependence on God and not on man; unless there be a spirit of justice, mercy, truth, trust of God in them, their freedom will be of no effect; they will only fall back into slavery, to be oppressed by fresh tyrants.

So it was with the great Spanish colonies in South America a few years ago. God gave them freedom from the tyranny of Spain; but what advantage was it to them? Because there was no righteousness in them; because they were a cowardly, profligate, false, and cruel people, therefore they only

became the slaves of their own lusts; they turned God's great grace of freedom into licentiousness, and have been ever since doing nothing but cutting each other's throats; every man's hand against his own brother; the slaves of tyrants far more cruel than those from whom they had escaped.

Look at the French people, too. Three times in the last sixty years has God delivered them from evil rulers, and given them a chance of freedom; and three times have they fallen back into fresh slavery. And why? Because they will not be righteous; because they will be proud, boastful, lustful, godless, cruel, making a lie and loving it. God help them! We are not here to judge them, but to take warning ourselves. Now there is no use in boasting of our English freedom, unless we have free and righteous hearts in us; for it is not constitutions, and parliaments, and charters which make a nation free; they are only the shell, the outside of freedom. True freedom is of the heart and spirit, and comes down from above, from the Spirit of God; for where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty, and there only. Oh, every one of you! high and low, rich and poor, pray and struggle to get your own hearts free; free from the sins which beset us Englishmen in these days; free from pride, prejudice, and envy; free from selfishness and covetousness; free from unchastity and drunkenness; free from the conceit that England is safe, while all the rest of the world is shaking. Be sure that the spirit of freedom, like every other good and perfect gift, is from above, and comes down from God, the Father of lights; and that to keep that spirit with us, we must keep ourselves worthy of it, and not expect to remain free if we indulge ourselves in mean and slavish sins.

So the Jews got the king they wanted—a king to

look at and be proud of. Saul was, we read, a head taller than all the rest of the people, and very handsome to look at. And he was brave enough, too, in mere fighting, when he was awakened and stirred up to act now and then; but there was no wisdom in him; no real trust in God in him. He took God for an idol, like the heathens' false gods, which had to be pleased and kept in good humour by the smell of burnt sacrifices; and not for a living, righteous Person, who had to be obeyed. We read of Saul's misconduct in these respects, in the thirteenth and fifteenth chapters of the First Book of Samuel. That was only the beginning of his wickedness. The worst points in his character, as I shall show in my next sermon, came out afterwards. But still, his disobedience was enough to make God cast him off, and leave him to go his own way to ruin.

But God was not going to cast off His people whom He loved. He deals not with mankind after their sins, neither rewards them according to their iniquities; and so he chose out for them a king after His own heart—a true king of God's making, not a mere sham one of man's making. You may think it strange why God should have given them a second king; why, as soon as Saul died, He did not let them return back to their old freedom. But that is not God's way. He brings good out of evil in His great mercy. But it is always by strange winding paths. His ways are not as our ways. First, God gives man what is perfectly proper for him at that time; sets man in his right place; and then when man falls from that, God brings him, not back to the place from which he fell, but on forward into something far higher and better than what he fell from. He put Adam into Paradise. Adam fell from it, and God made use of the fall to

bring him into a state far better than Paradise—into the kingdom of God—into everlasting life—into the likeness of Christ, the new Adam, who is a quickening, life-giving spirit, while the old Adam was, at best, only a living soul.

So with the church of Christian men. After the apostles' time, and even during the apostles' time, as we read from the Epistle to the Galatians, they fell away, step by step, from the liberty of the gospel, till they sunk entirely into popish superstition. And yet God brought good out of that evil. He made that very popery a means of bringing them back at the Reformation into clearer light than any of the first Christians ever had had. He is going on step by step still, bringing Christians into a clearer knowledge of the gospel than even the Reformers had.

And so with the Jews. They fell from their liberty and chose a king. And yet God made use of those kings of theirs, of David, of Solomon, of Josiah, and Hezekiah, to teach them more and more about Himself and His law, and to teach all nations, by their example, what a nation should be, and how He deals with one.

But now let us see what this true king, David, was like, whom God chose, that He might raise, by his means, the Jews higher than they ever yet had been, even in their days of freedom. Now remark, in the first place, that David was not the son of any very great man. His father seems to have been only a yeoman. He was not bred up in courts. We find that when Samuel was sent to anoint David king, he was out keeping his father's sheep in the field. And though, no doubt, he had shown signs of being a very remarkable youth from the first, yet his father thought so little of him, that he was going to pass him over, and

caused all his seven elder sons to pass before Samuel for his choice first, though there seems to have been nothing particular in them, except that some of them were fine men and brave soldiers. So David seems to have been overlooked, and thought but little of in his youth —and a very good thing for him. It is a good thing for a young man to bear the yoke in his youth, that he may be kept humble and low; that he may learn to trust in God, and not in his own wit. And even when Samuel anointed David, he anointed him privately. His brothers did not know what a great honour was in store for him; for we find, in the lesson which we have just read, that when David came down to the camp, his elder brother spoke contemptuously to him, and treated him as a child. "I know thy pride," he said, "and the naughtiness of thy heart. Thou art come down to see the battle." While David answers humbly enough: "What have I done? is there not a cause?" feeling that there was more in him than his brother gave him credit for; though he dare not tell his brother, hardly, perhaps, dare believe himself, what great things God had prepared for him. So it is yet—a prophet has no honour in his own country. How many a noble-hearted man there is, who is looked down upon by those round him! How many a one is despised for a dreamer, or for a Methodist, by shallow worldly people, who in God's sight is of very great price! But God sees not as man sees. He makes use of the weak people of this world to confound the strong. He sends about His errands not many noble, not many mighty; but the poor man, rich in faith, like David. He puts down the mighty from their seat, and exalts the humble and meek. He takes the beggar from the dunghill, that He may set him among the princes of His people. So

He has been doing in all ages. So He will do even now, in some measure, with everyone like David, let him be as low as he will in the opinion of this foolish world, who yet puts his trust utterly in God, and goes about all his work, as David did, in the name of the Lord of hosts. Oh! if a poor man feels that God has given him wit and wisdom—feels in him the desire to rise and better himself in life, let him be sure that the only way to rise is David's plan—to keep humble and quiet till God shall lift him up, trusting in God's righteousness and love to raise him, and deliver him, and put him in that station, be it high or low, in which he will be best able to do God's work, or serve God's glory.

And now for the chapter from which the text is taken, which relates to us David's first great public triumph—his victory over Goliath the giant. I will not repeat it to you, because everyone here who has ears to hear or a heart to feel ought to have been struck with every word in that glorious story. All I will try to do is, to show you how the working of God's Spirit comes out in David in every action of his on that glorious day. We saw just now David's humbleness and gentleness, the fruits of God's Spirit in him, in his answer to his proud and harsh brother. Look next at David's spirit of trust in God, which, indeed, is the key to his whole life; that is the reason why he was the man after God's own heart—not for any virtues of his own, but for his unshaken continual faith in God. David saw in an instant why the Israelites were so afraid of the giant; because they had no faith in God. They forgot that they were the armies of the living God. David did not: "Who is this uncircumcised, that he shall defy the armies of the living God?" And therefore, when Saul tried to

dissuade him from attacking the Philistine, his answer is still the same—full of faith in God. He knew well enough what a fearful undertaking it was to fight with this giant, nearly ten feet high, armed from head to foot with mail, which perhaps no sword or spear which he could use could pierce. It was no wonder, humanly speaking, that all the Jews fled from him—that his being there stopped the whole battle. In these days, fifty such men would make no difference in a battle; bullets and cannon-shot would mow down them like other men: but in those old times, before firearms were invented, when all battles were hand-to-hand fights, and depended so much on each man's strength and courage, that one champion would often decide the victory for a whole army, the amount of courage which was required in David is past our understanding; at least we may say, David would not have had it but for his trust in God, but for his feeling that he was on God's side, and Goliath on the devil's side, unjustly invading his country in self-conceit, and cruelty, and lawlessness. Therefore he tells Saul of his victory over the lion and the bear. You see again, here, the Spirit of God showing in his *modesty*. He does not boast or talk of his strength and courage in killing the lion and the bear; for he knew that that strength and courage came from God, not from himself; therefore he says that the Lord *delivered him* from them. He knew that he had been only doing his duty in facing them when they attacked his father's sheep, and that it was God's mercy which had protected him in doing his duty. He felt now, that if no one else would face this brutal giant, it was *his* duty, poor, simple, weak youth as he was, and therefore he trusted in God to bring him safe through this danger also. But look again how the Spirit of God shows in

his prudence. He would not use Saul's armour, good as it might be, because he was not accustomed to it. He would use his own experience, and fight with the weapons to which he had been accustomed—a sling and stone. You see he was none of those presumptuous and fanatical dreamers who tempt God by fancying that He is to go out of His way to work miracles for them. He used all the proper and prudent means to kill the giant, and trusted to God to bless them. If he had been presumptuous, he might have taken the first stone that came to hand, or taken only one, or taken none at all, and expected the giant to fall down dead by a miracle. But no; he *chooses five smooth* stones out of the brook. He tried to get the best that he could, and have more ready if his first shot failed. He showed no distrust of God in that; for he trusted in God to keep him cool, and steady, and courageous in the fight, and that, he knew, God alone could do. The only place, perhaps, where he could strike Goliath to hurt him was on the face, because every other part of him was covered in metal armour. And he knew that, in such danger as he was, God's Spirit only could keep his eye clear and his hand steady for such a desperate chance as hitting that one place.

So he went; and as he went his courage rose higher and higher; for unto him that hath shall more be given; and so he began to boast too—but not of himself, like the giant. He boasted of the living God, who was with him. He ran boldly up to the Philistine, and at the first throw, struck on the forehead, and felled him dead.

So it is; many a time the very blessing which we expect to get only with great difficulty, God gives us at our first trial, to show that He is the Giver, to cheer

up our poor doubting hearts, and show us that He is able, and willing too, to give exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think.

So David triumphed: and yet that triumph was only the beginning of his troubles. Sad and weary years had he to struggle on before he gained the kingdom which God had promised him. So it is often with God's elect. He gives them blessings at first, to show them that He is really with them; and then He lets them be evil-entreated by tyrants, and suffer persecution, and wander out of the way in the wilderness, that they may be made perfect by suffering, and purified, as gold is in the refiner's fire, from all selfishness, conceit, ambition, cowardliness, till they learn to trust God utterly, to know their own weakness, and His strength, and to work only for Him, careless what becomes of their own poor worthless selves, provided they can help His kingdom to come, and get His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And now, my friends, surely there is a lesson in all this for you. Do you wish to rise like David? Of course not one in ten thousand can rise as high, but we may all rise somewhat, if not in rank, yet still, what is far better, in spirit, in wisdom, in usefulness, in manfulness. Do you wish to rise so? then follow David's example. Be truly brave, be truly modest, and in order to be truly brave and truly modest, that is, be truly manly, be truly godly. Trust in God; trust in God; that is the key to all greatness. Courage, modesty, truth, honesty, and gentleness; all things, which are noble, lovely, and of good report; all things, in short, which will make you men after God's own heart, are all only the different fruits of that one blessed life-giving root—FAITH IN GOD.

XXV.

DAVID'S EDUCATION.

Made perfect through sufferings.—HEBREWS ii. 10.

THAT is my text; and a very fit one for another sermon about David, the king after God's own heart. And a very fit one too, for any sermon preached to people living in this world now or at any time. "A melancholy text," you will say. But what if it be melancholy? That is not the fault of me, the preacher. The preacher did not make suffering, did not make disappointment, doubt, ignorance, mistakes, oppression, poverty, sickness. There they are, whether we like it or not. You have only to go on to the common here, or any other common or town in England, to see too much of them—enough to break one's heart if—, but I will not hurry on too fast in what I have to say. What I want to make you recollect is, that misery is here round us, *in* us. A great deal which we bring on ourselves; and a great deal more misery which we do not, as far as we can see, bring on ourselves; but which comes, nevertheless, and lets us know plainly enough that it is close to us. Every man and woman of us have their sorrows. There is no use shutting our eyes just when we ourselves happen to feel tolerably easy, and saying, as too many do, "I don't see so very much sorrow; I am happy enough!" Are you, friend, happy enough? So much the worse for you

perhaps. But at all events your neighbours are not happy enough; most of them are only too miserable. It is a sad world. A sad world, and full of tears. It is. And you must not be angry with the preacher for reminding you of what is.

True; you would have a right to quarrel with the preacher or anyone else who made you sorrowful with the thoughts of the sorrow round you, and then gave you no explanation of it—told you of no use, no blessing in it, no deliverance from it. That would be enough to break any man's heart, if all the preacher could say was: "This wretchedness, and sickness, and death, must go on as long as the world lasts, and yet it does no good, for God or man." That thought would drive any feeling man to despair, tempt him to lie down and die, tempt him to fancy that God was not God at all, not the God whose name is Love, not the God who is our Father, but only a cruel taskmaster, and Lord of a miserable hell on earth, where men and women, and worst of all, little children, were tortured daily by tens of thousands without reason, or use, or hope of deliverance, except in a future world, where not one in ten of them will be saved and happy. That is many people's notion of the world—religious people's even. How they can believe, in the face of such notions, "that God is love;" how they can help going mad with pity, if that is all the hope they have for poor human beings, is more than I can tell. Not that I judge them—to their own master they stand or fall: but this I do say, that if the preacher has no better hope to give you about this poor earth, then I cannot tell what right he has to call himself a preacher of the gospel—that is, a preacher of good news; then I do not know what Jesus Christ's dying to take away the sins of the world means; then I do not know what the

kingdom of God means; then I do not know why the Lord taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," if the only way in which that can be brought about is by His sending ninety-nine hundredths of mankind to endless torture, over and above all the lesser misery which they have suffered in this life. What will be the end of the greater part of mankind we do not know; we were not intended to know. God is love, and God is justice, and His justice is utterly loving, as well as His love utterly just; so we may very safely leave the world in the hands of Him who made the world, and be sure that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and that what is right is certain never to be cruel, but rather merciful. But to every one of you who are here now, a preacher has a right, ay, and a bounden duty, to say much more than that. He is bound to tell you good news, because God has called you into His church, and sent you here this day, to hear good-news. He has a right to tell you, as I tell you now, that, strange as it may seem, whatsoever sufferings you endure are sent to make you perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect; even as the blessed Lord, whom may you all love, and trust, and worship, for ever and ever, was made perfect by sufferings, even though He was the sinless Son of God. Consider that. "It behoved Him," says St. Paul, "the Captain of our salvation, to be made perfect through sufferings." And why? "Because," answers St. Paul, "it was proper for Him to be made in all things like His brothers"—like us, the children of God—"that He might be a faithful and merciful high priest;" for, just "because He has suffered being tempted, He is able to succour us who are tempted." A strange text, but one which, I think, this very history of David's

troubles will help us to understand. For it was by suffering, long and bitter, that God trained up David to be a true king, a king over the Jews, "after God's own heart."

You all know, I hope, something at least of David's psalms. Many of them, seven of them at least, were written during David's wanderings in the mountains, when Saul was persecuting him to kill him, day after day, month after month, as you may read in the First Book of Samuel, from chapters xix. to xxviii. Bitter enough these troubles of David would have been to any man, but what must have made them especially bitter and confusing to him was, that they all arose out of his righteousness. Because he had conquered the giant, Saul envied him—broke his promise of giving David his daughter Merab—put his life into extreme danger from the Philistines, before he would give him his second daughter Michal; the more he saw that the Lord was with David, and that the young man won respect and admiration by behaving himself wisely, the more afraid of him Saul was; again and again he tried to kill him; as David was sitting harmless in Saul's house, soothing the poor madman by the music of his harp, Saul tries to stab him unawares; and not content with that proceeds deliberately to hunt him down, from town to town, and wilderness to wilderness; sends soldiers after him to murder him; at last goes out after him himself with his guards. Was not all this enough to try David's faith? Hardly any man, I suppose, since the world was made, had found righteousness pay him less; no man was ever more tempted to turn round and do evil, since doing good only brought him deeper and deeper into the mire. But no, we know that he did not lose his trust in God; for we have seven psalms, at least, which he wrote

during these very wanderings of his; the fifty-second, when Doeg had betrayed him to Saul; the fifty-fourth, when Ziphim betrayed him; the fifty-sixth, when the Philistines took him in Gath; the fifty-seventh, "when he fled from Saul in the cave;" the fifty-ninth, "when they watched the house to kill him;" the sixty-third, "when he was in the wilderness of Judah;" the thirty-fourth, "when he was driven away by Abimelech;" and several more which appear to have been written about the same time.

Now, what strikes us first, or ought to strike us, in these psalms, is David's utter faith in God. I do not mean to say that David had not his sad days, when he gave himself up for lost, and when God seemed to have forsaken him, and forgotten his promise. He was a man of like passions with ourselves; and therefore he was, as we should have been, terrified and faint-hearted at times. But exactly what God was teaching and training him to be, was not to be faint-hearted—not to be terrified. He began in his youth by trusting God. That made him the man after God's own heart, just as it was the want of trust in God which made Saul not the man after God's own heart, and lost him his kingdom. In all those wanderings and dangers of David's in the wilderness, God was training, and educating, and strengthening David's faith according to His great law: To whomsoever hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seems to have. And the first great fruit of David's firm trust in God was his patience.

He learned to wait God's time, and take God's way, and be sure that the same God who had promised that he should be king, would make him king when he saw fit. He knew, as he says himself, that the Strength

of Israel could not lie or repent. He had sworn that He would not fail David. And he learned that God had sworn by His holiness. He was a holy, just, righteous God; and David and David's country now were safe in His hands. It was his firm trust in God which gave him strength of mind to use no unfair means to right himself. Twice Saul, his enemy, was in his power. What a temptation to him to kill Saul, rid himself of his tormentor, and perhaps get the kingdom at once! But no. He felt: "This Saul is a wicked, devil-tormented murderer, a cruel tyrant and oppressor; but the same God who chose me to be king next, chose him to be king now. He is the Lord's anointed. God put him where he is, and leaves him there for some good purpose; and when God has done with him, God will take him away, and free this poor oppressed people; and in the meantime, I, as a private man, have no right to touch him. I must not do evil that good may come. If I am to be a true king, a true man at all hereafter, I must keep true now; if I am to be a righteous lawgiver hereafter, I must respect and obey law myself now. The Lord be judge between me and Saul; for He is Judge, and He will right me better than I can ever right myself." And thus did trust in God bring out in David that true respect for law, without which a king, let him be as kind-hearted as he will, is but too likely to become at last a tyrant and an oppressor.

But another thing which strikes any thinking man in David's psalms, is his strong feeling for the poor, and the afflicted, and the oppressed. That is what makes the Psalms, above all, the poor man's book, the afflicted man's book. But how did he get that fellow-feeling for the fallen? By having fallen himself, and tasted affliction and oppression. That was how he was educated to be

a true king. That was how he became a picture and pattern—a "type," as some call it, of Jesus Christ, the man of sorrows. That is why so many of David's psalms apply so well to the Lord; why the Lord fulfilled those psalms when He was on earth. David was truly a man of sorrows; for he had not only the burden of his own sorrows to bear, but that of many others. His parents had to escape, and to be placed in safety at the court of a heathen prince. His friend Abimelech the priest, because he gave David bread when he was starving, and Goliath's sword—which, after all, was David's own—was murdered by Saul's hired ruffians, at Saul's command, and with him his whole family, and all the priests of the town, with their wives and children, even to the baby at the breast. And when David was in the mountains, everyone who was distressed, and in debt, and discontented, gathered themselves to him, and he became their captain; so that he had on him all the responsibility, care, and anxiety of managing all those wild, starving men, many of them, perhaps, reckless and wicked men, ready every day to quarrel among themselves, or to break out in open riot and robbery against the people who had oppressed them; for—(and this, *too*, we may see from David's psalms, was not the smallest part of his anxiety)—the nation of the Jews seems to have been in a very wretched state in David's time. The poor seem in general to have lost their land, and to have become all but slaves to rich nobles, who were grinding them down, not only by luxury and covetousness, but often by open robbery and bloodshed. The sight of the misrule and misery, as well as of the bloody and ruinous border inroads which were kept up by the Philistines and other neighbouring tribes, seems for years to have been the uppermost, as well as the

deepest thought in David's mind, if we may judge from those psalms of his, of which this is the key-note; and it was not likely to make him care and feel less about all that misery when he remembered (as we see from his psalms he remembered daily) that God had set him, the wandering outlaw, no less a task than to mend it all; to put down all that oppression, to raise up that degradation, to train all that cowardice into self-respect and valour, to knit into one united nation, bound together by fellow-feeling and common faith in God, that mob of fierce, and greedy, and (hardest task of all, as he himself felt) utterly deceitful men. No wonder that his psalms begin often enough with sadness, even though they may end in hope and trust. He had a work around him and before him which ought to have made his heart sad, which was a great part of his appointed education, and helped to make him perfect by sufferings.

And so, upon the bare hill-side, in woods and caves of the earth, in cold and hunger, in weariness and dread of death, did David learn to be the poor man's king, the poor man's poet, the singer of those psalms which shall endure as long as the world endures, and be the comfort and the utterance of all sad hearts for evermore. Agony it was, deep and bitter, and for the moment more hopeless than the grave itself, which crushed out of the very depths of his heart that most awful and yet most blessed psalm, the twenty-second, which we read in church every Good Friday. The "Hind of the Morning" is its title; some mournful air to which David sang it, giving, perhaps, the notion of a timorous deer roused in the morning by the hunters and the hounds. We read that psalm on Good Friday, and all say that our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled it. What do we mean hereby?

We mean hereby, that we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all sorrows which man can taste. He filled the cup of misery to the brim, and drained it to the dregs. He was afflicted in all David's afflictions, in the afflictions of all mankind. He bare all their sicknesses, and carried all their infirmities; and therefore we read this psalm upon Good Friday, upon the day in which He tasted death for every man, and went down into the lowest depths of terror, and shame, and agony, and death; and, worst of all, into the feeling that God had forsaken Him, that there was no help or hope for Him in heaven, as well as earth—no care or love in the great God, whose Son He was—went down, in a word, into hell; that hell whereof David and Heman, and Hezekiah after them, had said, "Shall the dust give thanks unto thee? and shall it declare thy truth?"—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption."—"My life draweth nigh unto hell. . . . I am like one stript among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more; and they are cut off from thy hand. . . . Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? and shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of destruction?"—"For the grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth."

Even into that lowest darkness, where man feels, even for one moment, that God is nothing to him, and he is nothing to God—even into that Jesus condescended to go down for us. That worst of all temptations, of which David only tasted a drop when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus drained to the very dregs for us. He went down

into hell for us, and conquered hell and death, and the darkness of the unknown world, and rose again glorious from them, that He might teach us not to fear death and hell; that He might know how to comfort us in the hour of death: and in the day of judgment, when on our sick bed, or in some bitter shame and trouble, the lying devil is telling us that we are damned and lost, and forsaken by God, and every sin we ever did rises up and stares us in the face.

Truly He is a king!—a king for rich and poor, young and old, Englishmen and negro; all alike He knows them, He feels for them, He has tasted sorrow for them, far more than David did for those poor, oppressed, sinful Jews of his. Read those Psalms of David; for they speak not only of David, now long since dead and gone, but of the blessed Jesus, who lives and reigns over us now at this very moment. Read them, for they are inspired; the honest words of a servant of God crying out to the same God, the same Saviour and Deliverer as we have. And His love has not changed. His arm is not shortened that He cannot save. Your words need not change. The words of those psalms in which David prayed, in them you and I may pray. Right out of the depths of his poor distracted heart they came. Let them come out of our hearts too. They belong to us more than even they did to the Jews, for whom David wrote them—more than even they did to David himself; for Jesus has fulfilled them—filled them full—given them boundlessly more meaning than ever they had before, and given us more hope in using them than ever David had: for now that love and righteousness of God, in which David only trusted beforehand, has come down and walked on this earth in the shape of a poor man, Jesus Christ, the Son of the maiden of Bethlehem.

Oh, you who are afflicted, pray to God in those psalms; not merely in the words of them, but in the spirit of them. And to do that, you must get from God the spirit in which David wrote them—the Spirit of God. Pray for that Spirit; for the spirit of patience, which made David wait God's good time to right him, instead of trying, as too many do, to right himself by wrong means; for the spirit of love, which taught David to return good for evil; for the spirit of fellow-feeling, which taught David to care for others as well as himself; and in that spirit of love, do you pray for others while you are praying for yourself. Pray for that Spirit which taught David to help and comfort those who were weaker than himself, that you in your time may be able and willing to comfort and help those who are weaker than yourselves. And above all, pray for the Spirit of faith, which made David certain that oppression and wrong-doing could not stand; that the day must surely come when God would judge the world righteously, and hear the cry of the afflicted, and deliver the outcast and poor, that the man of the world might be no more exalted against them. Pray, in short, for the Spirit of Christ; and then be sure He will hear your prayers, and answer them, and show Himself a better friend, and a truer King to you, than ever David showed himself to those poor Jews of old. He will deliver you out of all your troubles—if not in this life, yet surely in the life to come; and though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds in Him who loved you, and gave Himself for you, that you might inherit all heaven and earth in Him.

XXVI.

THE VALUE OF LAW.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God.—ROMANS xiii. 1.

WHAT is the difference between a civilised man and a savage? You will say: A civilised man can read and write; he has books and education; he knows how to make numberless things which makes his life comfortable to him. He can get wealth, and build great towns, sink mines, sail the sea in ships, spread himself over the face of the earth, or bring home all its treasures, while the savages remain poor, and naked, and miserable, and ignorant, fixed to the land in which they chance to have been born.

True: but we must go a little deeper still. Why does the savage remain poor and wretched, while the civilised people become richer and more prosperous? Why, for instance, do the poor savage gipsies never grow more comfortable or wiser—each generation of them remaining just as low as their forefathers were, or, indeed, getting lower and fewer? for the gipsies, like all savages, are becoming fewer and fewer year by year, while, on the other hand, we English increase in numbers, and in wealth, and knowledge; and fresh inventions are found out year by year, which give fresh employment and make life more safe and more pleasant.

This is the reason: That the English have laws and obey them, and the gipsies have none. This is the whole secret. This is why savages remain poor and miserable, that each man does what he likes without law. This is why civilised nations like England thrive and prosper, because they have laws and obey them, and every man does not do what he likes, but what the law likes. Laws are made not for the good of one person here, or the other person there, but for the good of all; and, therefore, the very notion of a civilised country is, a country in which people cannot do what they like with their own, as the savages do. "Not do what he likes with his own?" Certainly not; no one can or does. If you have property, you cannot spend it all as you like. You have to pay a part of it to the government, that is, into the common stock, for the common good, in the shape of rates and taxes, before you can spend any of it on yourself. If you take wages, you cannot spend them all upon yourself and do what you like with them. If you do not support your wife and family out of them, the law will punish you. You cannot do what you like with your own gun, for you may not shoot your neighbour's cattle or game with it. You cannot do what you like with your own hands, for the law forbids you to steal with them. You cannot do what you like with your own feet, for the law will punish you for trespassing on your neighbour's ground without his leave. In short, you can only do with your own what will not hurt your neighbour, in such matters as the law can take care of. And more, in any great necessity the law may actually hurt you for the good of the nation at large. The law may compel you to sell your land, to your own injury, if it is wanted for a railroad. The law may compel you, as it did fifty years ago, to serve

as a soldier in the militia, to your own injury, if there is a fear of foreign invasion; so that the law is above each and all of us. Our own wills are not our masters. No man is his own master. The law is the master of each and all of us, and if we will not obey it willingly, it can make us obey unwillingly.

Can make us? Ay, but ought it to make us? Is it right that the law should over-ride our own free wills, and prevent our doing what we like with our own?

It is right—absolutely right. St. Paul tells us what gives law this authority: "There is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God." And he tells us also why this authority is given to the law. "Rulers," he says, "are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of those who administer the law? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from them, for they are God's ministers to thee for good."

For good, you see. For the good of mankind it was, that God put into their hearts and reasons, that notion of making laws, and appointing kings and magistrates to see that those laws are obeyed. For our good. For without law no man's life, or family, or property would be safe. Every man's private selfishness, and greediness, and anger, would struggle without check to have its way, and there would be no bar or curb to keep each and every man from injuring each and every man else; so the strong would devour the weak, and then tear each other in pieces afterwards. So it is among the savages. They have little or no property, for they have no laws to protect property; and therefore every man expects his neighbour to steal from him, and finds it his shortest plan to steal from his neighbour, instead of settling down to sow corn which he will have no chance of eating, or build houses

which may be taken from him at night by some more strong and cunning savage. There is no law among savages to protect women and children against the men, and therefore the women are treated worse than beasts, and the children murdered to save the trouble of rearing them. Every man's hand is against his neighbour. No one feels himself safe, and therefore no one thinks it worth while to lay up for the morrow. No one expects justice and mercy to be done to him, and therefore no one thinks it worth while to do justice and mercy to others. And thus they live in continual fear and quarrelling, feeding like wild animals on game or roots, often, when they have bad luck in their hunting, on offal which our dogs would refuse, and dwindle away and become fewer and wretcheder year by year; in this way do the savages in New South Wales live to this day, for want of law.

It is for our good, then, that God has put into the heart of man to make laws, and to obey them as sacred and divine things. For our good, in order to save us from sinking down into the same state of poverty and misery in which the savages are. For our good, because we are fallen creatures, with selfish and corrupt wills, continually apt to break loose, and please ourselves at the expense of our neighbours. For our good, because, however fallen we are, we are still brothers, members of God's family, bound to each other by duty and relationship, if not by love.

Just as in a family, if parents, brothers, and sisters will not do their duty to each other lovingly and of their free will, the law interferes, and the custom of the country interferes, and the opinion of neighbours interferes, and says: "You may not love your parents: but you have no right to leave them to starve." "You may not love your brothers: but if

you try to injure and slander them, you are doing an unnatural and hateful thing, abhorred by God and man, and you must expect us to treat you accordingly, as a wild beast who does not feel the common laws of nature and right and wrong." So with the law of the land. The law is meant to remind us more or less that we are brothers, members of one body; that we owe a duty to each other; that we are all equal in God's sight, who is no respecter of persons, or of rank, or of riches, any more than the law is when it punishes the greatest nobleman as severely as the poorest labourer. The law is meant to remind us that God is just; that when we injure each other, we sin against God; that God's rule and law is, that each transgression should receive its just reward, and that, therefore, because man is made in the likeness of God, man is bound, as far as he can, to visit every offence with due and proportionate punishment. And the law punishes, as St. Paul says, in God's name, and for God's sake. The magistrate is a witness for God's righteous government of the world, the minister of God's vengeance against evil-doers, to remind all continually that evil-doing has no place, and cannot prosper, and must not be allowed, upon this God's earth whereon we live.

But what if the laws are unfair, and punish only some sorts of evil-doers and not others? What if they are like spiders' webs, which catch the little flies, and let the great wasps break through? What if they punish poor and weak offenders, and let the rich and powerful sinners escape? "Obey them still," says St. Paul. In his time and country the laws were as unfair in that way as laws ever were, and yet he tells Christians to obey them for conscience's sake. Thank God that they do punish weak offenders. Pray

God that the time may come when they may be strong enough to punish great offenders also. But, in the meantime, see that they have not to punish you. As far as the laws go, they are right and good. As far as they keep down any sort of wrong-doing whatsoever, they are God's ordinances, and you must obey them for God's sake.

But what if the laws are not only unfair and partial, but also unjust and wrong? Are we to obey them then? Obey them still, says St. Paul. Of course, if they command you to do a clearly wrong thing; if, for instance, the law commanded you to worship idols, or to commit adultery, there is no question then; such laws cannot be God's ordinance. The laws can only be God's ordinance as far as they agree with what we know of God's will written in our hearts, and written in His holy Bible. Then a man must resist the law to the death, if need be, as the old martyrs did, dying as witnesses for God's righteous and eternal law, against man's false and unrighteous law. It is a very difficult thing, no doubt, to tell where to draw the line in such matters. But we, thank God, here in England now, have no need to puzzle our heads with such questions. Every man's conscience is free here, and he has full liberty to worship God as he thinks best, provided that by so doing he does not interfere with his neighbour's character, or property, or comfort. There is no single law in England now, that I know of, which a man has any need to refuse to obey, let his conscience be as tender as it may. And as for laws which we think hurtful to the country, or hurtful to any particular class in the country, our thinking them hurtful is no reason that we should not obey them. As long as they are law, they are God's ordinance, and we

have no right to break them. They may be useful after all. Or even if they are hurtful in some way, still God may be bringing good out of them in some other way, of which we little dream, as He has often done out of laws and customs which seem at first sight most foolish and hurtful, and yet which He endured and winked at, for the sake of bringing good out of evil. At all events, whatsoever laws are here in England, are made by the men whom we English have chosen, as the men most fit and wise to make them, and we are bound to abide by them. If Parliament is not wise enough to make perfectly good laws, that is no one's fault but our own; for if we were wise, we should choose wise law-makers, and we must be filled with the fruit of our own devices. As long as these laws have been made and passed, by Commons, Lords, and Queen, according to the ancient forms and constitution which God has taught our forefathers from time to time for more than a thousand years, and which have had God's blessing and favour on them, and made us, from the least of all nations, the greatest nation on the earth; in short, as long as those laws are made according to law, so long we are bound to believe them to be God's ordinance, and obey them. But understand; that is no reason why we should not try to get them improved; for when they are changed and done away according to the same law which made them, that will be a sign that they are God's ordinances no longer; that God thinks we have no more need for them, and does not require us to keep them. But as long as any law is what St. Paul calls "the powers that be," obeyed it must be, not only for wrath, but for conscience's sake.

That is a very important part of the matter. Obey the law, St. Paul says, not only for wrath, that

is, not only for fear of punishment, but for conscience's sake. Even if you do not expect to be punished; even if you think no one will ever find out that you have broken the law, remember it is God's ordinance. He sees you. Do not hurt your own conscience, and deaden your own sense of right and wrong, by breaking the least or the most unjust law in the slightest point.

For instance: some people think the income-tax is very unfair; and therefore they think there is no harm in cheating the revenue a little, by making out their income less than it is. Others, again, think the laws against smuggling unjust and harsh; and therefore they see no harm in trying to avoid paying duty on goods which they bring home, whenever they have an opportunity, or buying cheap goods, which they must know from their price are smuggled. Others, again, think the game laws are unfair, and therefore see no harm in going out shooting on their own lands without a licence; while many see no harm, or say they see no harm, in poaching on other people's grounds, and killing game contrary to law wherever they can. That it is wrong to break the law in these two first cases, you all know in your own hearts. On the matter of poaching, some of you, I know, have many very mistaken notions. But, my friends, I ask you only to look at the sin and misery which poaching causes, if you want to see that those who break the law do indeed break the ordinance of God, and that God's laws avenge themselves. Look at the idleness, the untidiness, the deceit, the bad company, the drunkenness, the misery and sin, to man, woman, and child, which that same poaching brings about, and then see how one little sin brings on many great ones; how a man, by despising the

authority of law, and fancying that he does no harm in disobeying the laws, from his own fancy about poaching being no harm, falls into temptation and a snare, and pierces himself through with many sorrows. My young friends, believe my words. Avoid poaching, even once in a way. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of water; no one can tell where it will stop. He who breaks the law in little things will be tempted to go on and break it in greater and greater things. He who begins by breaking man's law, which is the pattern of God's law, will be tempted to go on and break God's law also. Is it not so? There is no use telling me, "The game is no one's; there is no harm in taking it." Light words of that kind will not do to answer God with. You know there is harm in taking it; for you know, as well as I do, that you cannot go after game without neglecting your work to get it; or without going to the worst of public-houses, among the worst of company, to sell it. You know, as well as I do, that hand in hand with poaching go lying, and idling, and sneaking, and fear, and boasting, and swearing, and drinking, and the company of bad men and bad women. And then you say there is no harm in poaching. Do you suppose that I do not know, as well as any one of you here, what goes to the snaring of a hare, and the selling of a hare, and the spending of the ill-got price of a hare? My dear young men, I know that poaching, like many other sins, is tempting: but God has told us to flee from temptation—to resist the devil, and he will flee from us. If we are to give up ourselves without a struggle to every pleasant thing which tempts us, we shall soon be at the devil's door. We were sent into the world to fight against temptation and to conquer it. We were sent into the

world to do what God likes, not what we like; and therefore we were sent into the world to obey the laws of the land wherein we live, be they better or worse; because if we break one law because we don't like it, our neighbour may break another because he don't like that, and so forth; till there is neither law, nor peace, nor safety, but every man doing what is right in his own eyes, which is sure to end by every man's doing what is right in the devil's eyes. We were sent into the world to live as brothers, under laws which make us give up our own wills and selfish lusts for the common good. And if we find it difficult to keep the laws, if we are tempted to break the laws, God has promised His Spirit to those who ask Him. God has promised His Spirit to us. If we pray for that Spirit night and morning, He will make it easy for us to keep the laws. He will make us what our Lord was before us, humble, patient, loying, manful and strong enough to restrain our fancies and appetites, and to give up our wills for the good of our neighbours, anxious and careful to avoid all appearance of evil, trusting that because God is just, and God is King, all laws which are not wicked are His ordinance, and therefore being obedient to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, even as Jesus Christ Himself was, who, though He was Lord of all, paid taxes and tribute money to the Roman government, like the rest of the Jews, and kept the law of Moses perfectly, and was baptised with John's baptism, to show that in all just and reasonable things we are to obey the laws and customs of our forefathers, in the country to which it has pleased the Lord that we should belong.

XXVII.

THE SOURCE OF LAW.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God.—ROMANS xiii. 1.

IN this chapter, which we read for the second lesson for this afternoon's service, St. Paul gives good advice to the Romans, and equally good advice to us.

Of course what he says must be equally good for us, and for all people, at all times, in all countries, as long as time shall last; because St. Paul spoke by the Spirit of God, who is God eternal, and therefore cannot change His mind, but lays down, by the mouth of His apostles and prophets, the everlasting laws of right and wrong, which are always equally good for all.

But there is something in this lesson which makes it especially useful to us; because we English are in some very important matters very like the Romans to whom St. Paul wrote; though in others, thanks to Almighty God, we are still very unlike them.

Now, these old Romans, as I have often told you, had risen to be the greatest and mightiest people in the world, and to conquer many foreign countries, and set up colonies of Romans in them, very much as the English have done in India, and North America, and Australia: so that the little country of Italy, with its one great city of Rome, was mistress of vast lands far

beyond the seas, ten times as large as itself, just as this little England is.

But it is not so much this which I have to speak to you about now, as how this Rome became so great; for it was at first nothing but a poor little country town, without money, armies, trade, or any of those things which shallow-minded people fancy are the great strength of a nation. True, all those things are good; but they are useless and hurtful—and, what is more, they cannot be got—without something better than them; something which you cannot see nor handle; something spiritual, which is the life and heart of a country or nation, and without which it can never become great. This the old Romans had; and it made them become great. This we English have had for now fifteen hundred years; even when our forefathers were heathens, like the Romans, before we came into this good land of England, while we were poor and simple people, living in the barren moors of Germany, and the snowy mountains of Norway; even then we had this wonderful charm, by which nations are sure to become great and powerful at last; and in proportion as we have remembered and acted upon it, we English have thriven and spread; and whenever we have forgotten it and broken it, we have fallen into distress, and poverty, and shame, over the whole land.

Now, what is this wonderful charm which made the old Romans and we English great, which is stronger than money, and armies, and trade, and all the things which we can see and handle?

St. Paul tells us in the text: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God."

To respect the law; to believe that God wills men

to live according to law; and that He will teach men right and good laws; that magistrates who enforce the laws are God's ministers, God's officers and servants; that to break the laws is to sin against God;—that is the charm which worked such wonders, and will work them to the end of time.

So you see it was a very proper thing for St. Paul, when he wrote to these Romans after they became Christians, to speak to them as he does in this chapter. They might have fancied, and many did fancy, that because they were Jesus Christ's servants now, they need not obey their heathen rulers and laws any more. But St. Paul says: "No; Jesus Christ's being King of Kings, is only the strongest possible reason for your obeying these heathen rulers. For if He is King of all the earth, He is King of Rome also, and of all her colonies; and therefore you may be sure that He would not leave these Roman rulers, and laws here if He did not think it right and fitting. If Jesus Christ is Lord of lords He is Lord of these Roman rulers, and they are His ministers and stewards; and you must obey them, and pay taxes to them for conscience's sake, as unto the Lord, and not unto man."

So you see that St. Paul gave these Roman Christians no new commandment on these matters; nothing different from what their old heathen forefathers had believed. For the law which he mentions in verse 9, "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal," etc., had been for centuries past part of the old Roman law, as well as of Moses' law.

Those old heathen Romans believed, and rightly, that all law and order came from the great God of gods, whom they called in their tongue Jupiter, that is, the Heavenly Father. They believed that He would bless those who kept the laws; who kept their oaths

and agreements, and the laws about government, about marriage, about property, about inheritance; and that He would surely punish those who broke the laws, who defrauded their neighbours of their rights, who swore falsely against their neighbour, or broke their agreements, who were unfaithful to their wives and husbands, or in any way offended against justice between man and man. And they believed too, and rightly, that as long as they kept the laws, and lived justly and orderly by them, the great Heavenly Father would protect and prosper their town of Rome, and make it grow great and powerful, because they were living as He would have men live; not doing each what was right in the sight of his own eyes, but conquering their own selfish wills and private fancies, for the sake of their neighbour's good, and the good of his country, that they might all help and trust each other, as fellow-citizens of one nation.

Only St. Paul had told them: Your forefathers were right in fancying that law and right came from the great God of gods: but they knew hardly anything, or rather, in time they forgot almost everything, about that Heavenly Father. In their ignorance they mixed up the belief in the one great almighty and good God, which dwells in the hearts of all men, with filthy fables and superstitions till they came to fancy that there were many gods and not one, and that these many gods were sinful, foul, proud, and cruel, as fallen men. But you have been brought back to the knowledge of the one true, and righteous, and loving God, which your forefathers lost. He has revealed and shown Himself, and what He is like, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is love, and wisdom, and justice, and order itself; and, therefore, you must be sure, even more sure than your old heathen forefathers, that He cares

for a nation being at peace and unity within itself, governed by wise laws, doing justice between man and man, and keeping order throughout all its business, that every man may do his work and enjoy his wages without hindrance, or confusion, or fear, or robbery and oppression from those who are stronger than he. And so St. Paul says to them: "You must believe that power and law come from God, far more firmly and clearly than ever your heathen forefathers did."

Now that St. Paul was right in this we may see from the Old Testament. In the first lesson for this afternoon's service, we read how Jeremiah was sent with the most awful warnings to the king, and the queen, and the crown prince of his country. And why? Because they had broken the laws; because, in a word, they had been unfaithful stewards and ministers of the Lord God, who had given them their power and kingdom, and would demand a strict account of all which He had committed to their charge. But in the same book of the prophet Jeremiah we read more than this; we read exactly what St. Paul says about the heathen Roman governors: for the Lord God, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, sent Jeremiah with a message to all the heathen kings round about, to tell them that He was their Lord and Master, that He had given them their power, heathens as they were, because it seemed fit to Him, and that now, for their sins, He was going to deliver them over into the hand of another heathen, His servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and that whosoever would not serve Nebuchadnezzar, the Lord God would punish him with sword, and famine, and pestilence till he had consumed them. And the first four chapters of the book of Daniel, noble and wonderful as they are, seem to me to have been put into the Bible simply to teach us this one thing, that

heathen rulers, as well as Christians, are the Lord's servants, and that their power is ordained by God. For these chapters are entirely made up of the history, how God, by His prophet Daniel, taught the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar that he was God's minister and steward. And the latter part of the book of Daniel is the account of his teaching the same thing to another heathen, Cyrus the great and good king of Persia. And here St. Paul teaches the Christian Romans just the same thing about their heathen governors and heathen laws, that they are the ministers and the ordinance of God.

Now, our own English forefathers, as I said before, believed this same thing; and if I had time, I could show you, I think, plainly enough from God's dealings with England, how He has blest and prospered us whensoever we have acted up to it. But whether we have believed it or not, there is enough in our English laws, and in our English Prayer Book too, to witness for it and remind us of it.

The very title which we give the Queen, "Queen by the grace of God;" the solemn prayers for her when she is crowned and anointed, not in her own palace, or in the House of Parliament, but in the Church of God at Westminster; the prayers which we have just offered up for the Queen, for the government, and for the magistrates—these are all so many signs and tokens to us that they are God's stewards, called to do God's work, and that we must pray for God's grace to help them to fulfil their calling. And are not those ten commandments which stand in every church, a witness of the same thing? They are the very root of all law whatsoever. And more, the solemn oath which a witness takes in the court of justice, what is it but a sign of the same thing, that our forefathers, who appointed

these forms, believed that law and justice were holy things, and that he who goes into a court of law goes into the presence of God Himself, and confesses, when he promises to speak the truth, so help him God, that God is the protector and the avenger of law and justice?

But some people, and especially young and light-hearted persons, are ready to say: "Obey the powers that be, whosoever they may be, good or bad, and believe that to break their laws is to sin against God? We might as well be slaves at once. A man has a right to his own opinion; and if he does not think a law good, how can he be bound to obey it?"

You will often hear such words as those when you go out into the world, into great towns, where men meet together much. Let me give you, young people, a little advice about that beforehand; for, fine as it sounds, it is hollow and false at root.

If you wish to be really free, and to do what you like, like what is right; and do that, says St. Paul, and then the law will not interfere with you: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." And then he sums up what doing right is, in one short sentence: "Love thy neighbour as thyself; for love is the fulfilling of the law." All that the laws want to make you do, is to behave like men who do love their neighbours as themselves, and therefore do them no harm—to behave like men who are ready to give up their own private wills and pleasures, and even their own private property, if wanted, for the good of their

neighbours and their country. Therefore the law calls on you to pay rates and taxes, which are to be spent for the good of the nation at large. And if you love your neighbour as yourself, and have the good of everyone round you at heart, you will no more grudge paying rates and taxes for their benefit than you will grudge spending money to support and educate your own children. And so you will be free, free to do what you like, because you like, from the fear and love of God, to do those right things which the law is set to make you do.

But some may say: "That is not what we mean by being free. We mean having a share in choosing Members of Parliament, and so in making the laws and governing the country. When people can do that the country is a free country."

Well, my friends, and it is a strange thing, or rather not a strange thing, if we will but study our Bibles, that a country cannot be free in that way, unless the people of it do really believe that the powers that be are ordained of God. Instead of that faith making the old Romans slavish, or careless what laws were made, or how they were governed, as some fancy it would make a people, they were as free a people, and freer almost than we English now. They chose their own magistrates, and they made their own laws, and prospered by so doing. And why? Because they believed that laws came from God; and, therefore, they not only obeyed the laws when they were made, but they had heart and spirit to help to make them, because they trusted that The Heavenly Father, who loved justice, would teach them to be just, and that The God who protected laws and punished law-breakers, would put into their minds how to make the laws well; and so they were not afraid to govern themselves, be-

cause they believed that God would enable them to govern themselves well, and therefore they were free. And so far from their having a slavish spirit in them, they were the most bold and independent people of the whole earth. Their soldiers conquered almost every nation against whom they fought, because they always obeyed their officers dutifully and faithfully, believing that it was their duty to God to obey, and to die, if need was, for their country. Old history is full of tales, which will never be forgotten, I trust, till the world's end, of the noble deeds of their men, ay, and even of their women, who counted their own lives worthless in comparison with the good of their country, and died in torments rather than break the laws, or do what they knew would injure the people to whom they belonged.

And so with us English. For hundreds of years we have been growing more and more free, and more and more well-governed, simply because we have been acting on St. Paul's doctine—obeying the powers that be, because they are ordained by God. It is the Englishman's respect for law, as a sacred thing, which he dare not break, which has made him, sooner or later, respected and powerful wherever he goes to settle in foreign lands; because foreigners can trust us to be just, and to keep our promises, and to abide by the laws which we have laid down. It is the English respect for law, as a sacred thing, which has made our armies among the bravest and the most successful on earth; because they know how to obey their officers, and are therefore able to fight and to endure as men should do. And as long as we hold to that belief we shall prosper at home and abroad, and become more and more free, and more and more strong; because we shall be united, helping each other, trusting each other,

knowing what to expect of each other, because we all honour and obey the same laws.

And, on the other hand, have we not close to us, in France, a fearful sign and proof from God that without the fear of God no people can be free? Three times in the last sixty years have the French risen up against evil rulers, and driven them out. And have they been the better for it? They are at this very moment in utter slavery to a ruler more lawless than ever oppressed them before. And why? Because they did not believe that law came from God, and that the powers that be are ordained by Him. Therefore, whenever they were oppressed, they did not try to right themselves by lawful ways, according to the old English God-fearing custom, but to break down the old law by riot and bloodshed, and then to set up new laws of their own. But those new laws would never stand. They made them, but they would not obey them when they were made, and they could not make others obey them; because they had no real reverence for law, and did not believe that law came from God, or that His Spirit would give them understanding to make good laws. They talked loud about the power and rights of the people, and that whatever the people willed was right: but they said nothing about the power and rights of the Lord God; they forgot that it is only what God has willed from everlasting that is right; and so they made laws in the strength of their own hearts, according to what was right in the sight of their own eyes, to please themselves. How could they respect the laws, when the laws were only copies of their own selfish fancies? So, because they made them to please themselves, they soon broke them to please themselves. And so came more lawlessness and riot, and confusion worse confounded, till, of course,

the strongest, and cunningest, and most shameless got the upper hand, and they were plunged, poor creatures! into the same pit of misery out of which they had been trying to deliver themselves in their own strength, for a sign and an example that the Lord is King, and not man at all, and that the fear of the Lord is the only beginning of wisdom.

And very much the same sad fate had happened to the Romans a little before St. Paul's time. They gave up their ancient respect for law; they broke the laws, and ran into all kinds of violence, and riot, and filthy sin; and therefore God took away their freedom from them, because they were not fit for it, and delivered them over into the hand of one cruel tyrant after another; and perhaps the cruellest of them all was the man who was emperor of Rome in St. Paul's time. Therefore it was that St. Paul says to them: Love each other, and obey the laws, "knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep."

As much as to say: "Your souls have fallen asleep; you have been in a dark night, not seeing that God would avenge you of all these sins of yours; that God's eye was on them: you have fallen asleep and forgotten your forefathers' belief, that God loves law, and order, and justice, and will punish those who break through them. But now the Lord Jesus, the light of the world, is come to awaken you, and to open your eyes to see the truth about this, and to show you that you are in God's kingdom, and that God commands you to repent, and to obey Him, and do justly and righteously. Therefore awake out of your sleep; give up the works of darkness, those mean and wicked habits which were contrary to the good old laws of your forefathers, and which you were at heart ashamed of, and tried to hide even while you indulged in them.

Open your eyes, and see that God is near you, your Judge, your King, seeing through and through your souls, keen and sharp to discern the secret thoughts and intents of the heart, so that all things are naked and open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do."

And so I may say to you, my friends, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep. The people in England, religious as well as others, have fallen asleep of late years too much about this matter. They have forgotten that God is King, that magistrates are God's ministers. They talk as if laws were meant to be only the device of man's will, to serve men's private interests and selfishness; and therefore they have lost very much of their respect for law, and their care to make good laws for the future. And it is high time for us, while all the nations of Europe are tottering and crumbling round us, to awake out of sleep on this matter. We must open our eyes and see where we are. For we are in God's kingdom. God's Bible, God's churches, God's commandments, and all the solemn old law forms of England witness to us that God is King, set in the throne which judges right; that order and justice, fellow-feeling and public spirit, are His gifts, His likeness, on which He looks down with loving care and protection; and that if we forget that, and begin to fancy that law stands merely by the will of the many, or by the will of the stronger, or even by the will of the wiser—by any will of man in short; we shall end by neither being able to make just laws any more, nor to obey those which we have, by the blessing of God, already.

XXVIII.

THE EDUCATION OF A HEATHEN.

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.—DANIEL iv. 37.

WE read for the first lesson to-day two chapters out of the book of Daniel. Those who love to study their Bibles, have read often, of course, not only these two chapters, but the whole book.

And I would advise all of you who wish to understand God's dealings with mankind, to study this book of Daniel, and especially at this present time.

I do not wish you to study it merely on account of those prophecies in it, which many wise and good men think foretell the dates of our Lord's first and second comings, and of the end of the world. I am not skilled, my friends, in that kind of wisdom. I cannot tell you what God will do hereafter. But I think that the book of Daniel like the other prophets, tells us what God is always doing on earth, and so gives us certain and eternal rules by which we may understand strange and terrible events, wars, distress of nations, the fall of great men, and the suffering of innocent men, when we see them happen, as we may see any day—perhaps very soon indeed.

The great lesson, I think, that this book of Daniel teaches us is, that God is not the Lord of the Jews

only, or of Christians only, but of the whole earth; that the heathens are under His moral law and government, as well as we; and that, as St. Peter says, God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. For the history of Nebuchadnezzar seems to me to be the history of God's educating a heathen and an idolater to know Him. And we must always remember, that as far as we can see, it was because Nebuchadnezzar was faithful to the light which he had, that God gave him more. Of course he had his sins; the Bible tells us what they were; just the sins which one would expect of a man brought up a heathen and an idolater; of one who was a great conqueror, and had gained many bloody battles, and learned to hold men's lives very cheap; of one who was an absolute emperor, with no law but his own will, furious at any contradiction; of a man of wonderful power of mind—confident in himself, his own power, his own cunning. But he seems not to have been a bad man, considering his advantages. The Bible never speaks harshly of him, though he carried away the Jews captive to Babylon. In all that fearful war, Nebuchadnezzar was in the right, and the Jews in the wrong; so at least Jeremiah the prophet declared. Nebuchadnezzar saved and respected Jeremiah; and Daniel seems to have regarded the great conqueror with real respect and affection. When Daniel says to him, "O king, live for ever," and tells him that he is the head of gold, and prays that his fearful dream may come true of his enemies and not of him, I cannot believe that the prophet was using mere empty phrases of court-flattery. He really felt, I doubt not, that Nebuchadnezzar was a great and good king, as kings went then, and his government a gain (as it easily might be)

to the nations whom he had conquered, and that it was good that he should reign as long as possible.

And we may well believe Daniel's interest in this great king, when we consider how teachable Nebuchadnezzar showed himself under God's education of him, so proving that there was in him the honest and good heart, which, when The Word is sown in it, will bring forth fruit, thirty-fold or a hundred-fold, according to the talents which God has bestowed on each man.

This first lesson we read in the first chapter of Daniel. He dreamt a dream. He felt that it was a very wonderful one: but he forgot what it was. None of the magicians of Babylon could tell him. A young Jew, named Daniel, told him the dream and its meaning, and declared at the same time that he had found it out by no wisdom of his own, but God had revealed it to him. Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson, and confessed Daniel's God to be a God of gods and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing that Daniel could reveal that secret; and forthwith, like a wise prince, advanced Daniel and his companions to places of the highest authority and trust.

But Nebuchadnezzar required another lesson. He had learned that the God of the Jews was wiser than all the planets and heavenly lords and gods whom the Babylonian magicians consulted; he had not learned that that same God of the Jews was the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. He had learned that the God of heaven favoured him, and had helped him toward his power and glory; but he thought that for that very reason the power and glory were his own—that he had a right over the souls and consciences of his subjects, and might make them worship what he liked, and how he liked.

Three Jews, whom he had set over the affairs of Babylon, refused to worship the golden image which he had set up, and were cast into a fiery furnace, and forthwith miraculously delivered, and beheld by Nebuchadnezzar walking unhurt and loose in the midst of the furnace, and with them a fourth, whose form was like the form of the Son of God.

So Nebuchadnezzar was taught that this God of the Jews was the Lord of men's souls and consciences; that they were to obey God rather than man. So he was taught that the God of the Jews was no mere star or heavenly influence who could help men's fortunes, or bestow on them a certain fixed destiny; but a living person, the Lord and Master of the fire, and of all the powers of the earth, who could change and stop those powers at His will, to deliver those who trusted in Him and obeyed Him.

And this lesson, too, Nebuchadnezzar learned. He confessed his mistake upon the spot, just in the way in which we should have expected a great Eastern king to do, though not in the most enlightened or merciful way. He "blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants who trusted in Him. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

But there was still one deep mistake lying in the great king's heart which required to be rooted out. He had learnt that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was a revealer of secrets, a master of the fire, a deliverer of those who trusted in Him, a living personal Lord, wise, just, and faithful, very different

from any of his star gods or idols. But he looked upon Jehovah only as the God of the Jews, as Daniel's God. He had not yet learnt that God was *his* God as well as Daniel's; that Jehovah was very near his heart and mind, and had been near him all his life; that from Jehovah came all his wisdom, his strength of mind, his success, and all which made him differ, not only from his fellow-men, but from the beast; that Jehovah, in a word, was the light and the life of the world, who fills all things and by whom all things consist, deserted by whose inward light, even for a moment, man becomes as one of the beasts which perish. In his own eyes Nebuchadnezzar was still the great self-dependent, self-sufficing conqueror, wiser and stronger than all the men around him. He thought, most probably, that on account of his wisdom, and courage, and royalty of soul, the God of heaven had become fond of him and favoured him. In short, he was swollen with pride.

God sent him again a strange dream, which made him troubled and afraid. He told it to his old counsellor Daniel; and Daniel, at the danger of his life, interpreted it for him; and a very awful meaning it had. A fearful and shameful downfall was to come upon the king; no less than the loss of his reason, and with it, of his throne. But whether this came to pass or not, depended, like all God's everlasting promises and threats, on Nebuchadnezzar's own behaviour. If he repented, and broke off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, there was good reason to hope that so his tranquillity might be lengthened.

But the lesson was too hard for the proud conqueror; he did not take the warning. He could not believe that the Most High ruled in the kingdom of

men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. He still fancied that he, and such as he, were the lords of the world, and took from others by their own power and cunning whatsoever they would. He does not seem to have been angry, however, with Daniel for his plain speaking. Most Eastern kings like Nebuchadnezzar would have put Daniel to a cruel death on the spot as the bearer of evil news, speaking blasphemy against the king; and no one in those times and countries would have considered him wicked and cruel for so doing; but Nebuchadnezzar seems to have learnt too much already so to give way to his passion.

Yet, as I said before, he had not learned enough to take God's warning. The lesson that he was nothing, and that God is all in all, was too hard for him. And, alas! my friends, for whom of us is it not a hard lesson? And yet it is the golden lesson, the first and the last which man has to learn on earth, ay, and through all eternity: "I am nothing; God is all in all." All in us which is worth calling anything; all in us which is worth having, or worth being; all in us which is not disobedience and shortcoming, failure and mistake, ignorance and madness, filthiness and fierceness, as of the beasts which perish; all strength in us, all understanding, all prudence, all right-mindedness, all purity, all justice, all love; all in us which is worth living for, all in us which is really alive, and not mere death in life, the death of sin and the darkness of the pit—all is from God the Father of lights, and from Jesus Christ the life and the light, who lighteth every man who cometh into the world, shining for ever in the darkness of our spirits, though that darkness, alas! too often cannot comprehend, and embrace, and confess Him who is striving to awake it from the dead and give it light. Hardest of all lessons! Most blessed

of all lessons! So blessed, that if we will not let God teach it us in any other way, it would be good and advantageous to us for Him to teach it us as He taught it to Nebuchadnezzar—good for us to become with him for awhile like the beasts that perish, that we might learn with him to lift up our eyes to heaven, and so have our understandings return to us, and learn to bless the Most High, and not our own wit, and cunning, and prudence; and praise and honour Him that liveth for ever, instead of praising and honouring our own pitiful paltry selves, who are in death in the midst of life, who come up and are cut down like the flower, and never continue in one stay.

"All this came upon the King Nebuchadnezzar." It seems that after he or his father had destroyed the old Babylon, the downfall of which Isaiah had prophesied, he built a great city, after the fashion of Eastern conquerors, near the ruins of the old one; and "at the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar."

What a lesson! The great conqueror of all the East now a brutal madman, hateful and disgusting to all around him—a beast feeding among the beasts;

and yet a cheap price—a cheap price—to pay for this golden lesson.

Seven times past over him in his madness. What those seven times were we do not know. They may have been actual years: or they may have been, as I am inclined to think, changes in his own soul and state of mind. But, at the end of the days, the truth dawned on him. He began to see what it all meant. He saw what he was, and why he was so; and he lifted up his eyes to heaven; and from that moment his madness past. He lifted up his eyes to heaven. That is no mere figure of speech: it is an actual truth. Most madmen, if you watch them, have that down look, or rather that inward look, as if their eyes were fixed only on their own fancies. They are thinking only of themselves, poor creatures—of their own selfish and private suspicions and wrongs—of their own selfish superstitious dreams about heaven or hell—of their own selfish vanity and ambition—sometimes of their own frantic self-conceit, or of their selfish lusts and desires—of themselves, in short. They have lost the one Divine light of reason, and conscience, and love, which binds men to each other, and are parted for a while from God and from their kind—alone in their own darkness. So was Nebuchadnezzar.

At last he looked up, as men do when they pray; up from himself to One greater than himself; up from the earth to heaven; up from the natural things which we do see, which are temporal and born to die, to moral and spiritual things which we do not see, which are real and eternal in the heavens; up from his own lonely darkness, looking for the light and the guidance of God; for now he began to see that all the light which he had ever had, all his wisdom, and understanding, and strength of will, had come from God,

however he might have misused them for his own selfish ambition; that it was because God had taken from him His light, who is the Word of God, that he had become a beast. And then his reason returned to him, and he became again a man, a rational being, made, howsoever fallen and sinful, in the likeness of God; then he blessed and praised God. It was not merely that he confessed that God was strong, and he weak; righteous, and he sinful; wise, and he foolish; but he blessed and praised God; he felt and confessed that God had done him a great benefit, and taught him a great lesson—that God had taught him what he was in himself and without God, that he might see what he was with God in its true light, and honour and obey Him from whom his reason and understanding, as well as his power and glory, came, that so it might be fulfilled which the prophet says: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his might, nor the rich man in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness *in the earth*; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

And so was Nebuchadnezzar's soul brought to utter, in his own way, the very same glorious song which, or something like it, is said to have been sung by the three men whom, years before, he had seen delivered from the fiery furnace, which calls on all the works of the Lord, angels and heaven, sun and stars, seas and winds, mountains and hills, fowls and cattle, priests and laymen, spirits and souls of the righteous, to bless the Lord, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.

And so ends Nebuchadnezzar's history. We read no more of him. He had learnt the golden lesson. May God grant that we may learn it also!

But who tells the story of his madness? He himself. The whole account is in the man's own words. It seems to be some public letter or proclamation, which he either sent round his empire, or commanded to be laid up among his records; having, as it seems, set Daniel to write it down from his mouth. This one fact, I think, justifies me in all that I have said about Nebuchadnezzar's nobleness, and Daniel's affection for him. He does not try to smooth things over; to pretend that he has not been mad; to find excuses for himself; to lay any blame on any human being. He repents openly, confesses openly. Shameful as it may be to him, he tells the whole story. He confesses that he had fair warning, that all was his own fault. He justifies God utterly. My friends, we may read, thank God, many noble, and brave, and righteous speeches of kings and great men: but never have I read one so noble, so brave, so righteous as this of the great king of Babylon.

And therefore it is; because this letter of his, in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, is indeed full of the eternal Holy Spirit of God; therefore it is, I say, that it forms part of the Bible, part of holy scripture to this day,—a greater honour to Nebuchadnezzar than all his kingdom; for what greater honour than to have been inspired to write one chapter, yea, one sentence, of the Book of Books?

My friends, every one of you here is in God's school-house, under God's teaching, far more than Nebuchadnezzar was. You are baptised men, knowing that blessed name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which Nebuchadnezzar only saw dimly, and afar off. Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is striving with your hearts, giving to them whatsoever light and life they have. You have been taught from childhood to look

up to Him as your King and Deliverer; to His Father as your Father, to His Holy Spirit as your Inspirer. Take heed how you listen to His voice within your hearts. Take heed how you learn God's lessons; for God is surely educating you, and teaching you far more than He taught the king of Babylon in old time. As you learn or despise these lessons of God's, will be your happiness or your misery now and for ever. Unto the king of Babylon little was given, and of him was little required. To you and me much has been given; of you and me will much be required.

XXIX.

JEREMIAH'S CALLING.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.—JEREMIAH xxiii. 5.

AT the time when Jeremiah the prophet spoke those words to the Jews, nothing seemed more unlikely than that they would ever come true. The whole Jewish nation was falling to pieces from its own sins. Brutish and filthy idolatry in high and low—oppression, violence, and luxury among the court and the nobility—shame, and poverty, and ignorance among the lower classes—idleness and quackery among the priesthood—and as kings over all, one fool and profligate after another, set on the throne by a foreign conqueror, and pulled down again by him at his pleasure. Ten out of the twelve tribes of Israel had been carried off captive, young and old, into a distant land. The small portion of country which still remained inhabited round Jerusalem, had been overrun again and again by cruel armies of heathens. Without Jerusalem was waste and ruins, bloodshed and wretchedness; within every kind of iniquity and lies, division and confusion. If ever there was a miserable and contemptible people upon the face of the earth, it was the Jewish nation in Jeremiah's time. Jeremiah makes no secret of it. His prophecies are full of it—full of lamentation and

shame: "Oh that my head were a fountain of tears, to weep for the sins of my people!" He feels that God has sent him to rebuke those sins, to warn and prophesy to his fellow-countrymen the certain ruin into which they are rushing headlong; and he speaks God's message boldly. From the poor idol-ridden labourer, offering cakes to the Queen of Heaven to coax her into sending him a good harvest, to the tyrant king who had built his pälace of cedar and painted it with vermilion, he had a bitter word for every man. The lying priest tried to silence him; and Jeremiah answered him, that his wife should be a harlot in the city, and his children sold for slaves. The king tried to flatter him into being quiet; and he told him in return, that he should be buried with the burial of an ass, dragged out and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. The luxurious queen, who made her nest in the cedars, would be ashamed and confounded, he said, for her wickedness. The crown prince was a despised broken idol—a vessel in which was no pleasure; he should be cast out, he and his children, into slavery in a land which he knew not. The whole royal family, he said, would perish; none of them should ever again prosper or sit upon the throne of David. This was his message; shame and confusion, woe and ruin, to high and low; every human being he passed in the street was a doomed man. For the day of the Lord was at hand, and who should be able to escape it?

A sad calling, truly, to have to work at; and all the more sad because Jeremiah had no pride, no steadfast opinion of his own excellence to keep him up. He hates his calling of prophet. At the very moment he is foretelling woe, he prays God that his prophecy may not come true; he tries every method to prevent its coming true, by entreating his countrymen to repent.

There runs through all his awful words a vein of tenderness, and pity, and love unspeakable, which to me is the one great mark of a true prophet; a sign that Jeremiah spoke by the Spirit of God; a sign that too many writers nowadays do not speak by the Spirit of God. If they rebuke the rich and powerful, they do it generally in a very different spirit from Jeremiah's—in a spirit of bitterness and insolence, not very easy to describe, but easy enough to perceive. They seem to rejoice in evil, to delight in finding fault, to be sorry, and not glad, when their prophecies of evil turn out false; to try to set one class against another, one party against another, as if we were not miserably enough split up already by class interests and party spirit. They are glad enough to rebuke the wicked great; but not to their face, not to their own danger and hurt like Jeremiah. Their plan is to accuse the rich to the poor, on their own platform, or in their own newspaper, where they are safe; and, moreover, to make a very fair profit thereby; to say behind the back of authorities that which they dare not say to their face, and which they soon give up saying when they have worked their own way into office; and meanwhile take mighty credit to themselves for seeing that there is wrong and misery in the world; as if the spirits in hell should fancy themselves righteous, because they hated the devil! No, my friends, Jeremiah was of a very different spirit from that. If he ever was tempted to it when he was young, and began to fancy himself a very grand person, who had a right to look down on his neighbours, because God had called him and set him apart to be a prophet from his mother's womb, and revealed to him the doom of nations, and the secrets of His providence—if he ever fancied that in his heart, God led him through such an education as took all the pride out of him, sternly and bitterly enough. He was

commissioned to go and speak terrible words, to curse kings and nobles in the name of the Lord: but he was taught, too, that it was not a pleasant calling, or one which was likely to pay him in this life. His fellow-villagers plotted against his life. His wife deserted him. The nobles threw him into a dungeon, into a well full of mire, whence he had to be drawn up again with ropes to save his life. He was beaten, all but starved, kept for years in prison. He had neither child nor friend. He had his share of all the miseries of the siege of Jerusalem, and all the horrors of its storm; and when he was set free by Nebuchadnezzar, and clung to his ruined home, to see if any good could still be done to the remnant of his countrymen, he was violently carried off into a heathen land, and at last stoned to death, by those very countrymen of his whom he had been trying for years to save. In everything, and by everything, he was taught that he was still a Jew, a brother to his sinful brothers; that their sorrows were his sorrows, their shame his shame, their ruin his ruin. In all their afflictions he was afflicted, even as his Lord was after him.

He struggled, we find, again and again against this strange and sad calling of a prophet. He cried out in bitter agony that God had deceived him; had induced him to become a prophet, and then repaid him for speaking God's message with nothing but disappointment and misery. And yet he felt he must speak; God, he said, was stronger than he was, and forced him to it. He said: "I will speak no more words in His name; but the Word of the Lord was as fire within his bones, and would not let him rest;" and so, in spite of himself, he told the truth, and suffered for it; and hated to have to tell it, and pitied and loved the very country which he rebuked till he cursed "the day in which he saw the light, and the hour in which it

was said to his father, there is a man-child born." You who fancy that it is a fine thing, and a paying profession, to be a preacher of righteousness and a rebuker of sin, look at Jeremiah, and judge! For as surely as you or any other man is sent by God to do Jeremiah's work, so surely he must expect Jeremiah's wages.

Do you think, then, that Jeremiah was a man only to be pitied? Pitiable he was indeed, and sad. There was One hung on a cross eighteen hundred years ago, more pitiable still: and yet He is the Lord of heaven and earth. Yes; Jeremiah had a sad life to live, and a sad task to work out; and yet, my friends, was not that a cheap price to pay for the honour and glory of being taught by God's Spirit, and of speaking God's words? I do not mean the mere honour of having his fame and name spread over all Christ's kingdom; the honour of having his writings read and respected by the wisest and the holiest to the end of time; that mere earthly fame is but a slight matter. I mean the real honour, the real glory, of knowing what was utterly right and true, and therefore of knowing Him who is utterly right and true; of knowing God; of knowing what God's character is: that he is a living God, and not a dead one; a God who is near and not absent at all, loving and merciful, just and righteous, strong and mighty to save. Ay, my friends, this is the lesson which God taught Jeremiah; to know the Lord of heaven and earth, and to see His hand, His rule, in all that was happening to his fellow-countrymen, and himself; to know that from the beginning the Lord, the Saviour-God, Jehovah, the messenger of the covenant, He who brought up the Jews out of Egypt, was the wise and just and loving King of the Jews, and of all the nations upon earth; and that some day or other He must and would conquer all the

sinfulness, and misery, and tyranny, and idolatry in the world, and show Himself openly to men, and fulfil all the piteous longings after a just and good king which poor wretches had ever felt, and all the glorious promises of a just and good king which God had made to the wise men of old time; and, therefore, in the midst of shame and persecution, despair and ruin, Jeremiah could rejoice. Jehoiakim, the wicked king, and all his royal house, might be driven out into slavery; Jerusalem might become a heap of ruins and corpses; the fair land of Judæa, and the village where he was bred, might become thorns, and thistles, and heaps of stones; the vineyard which he loved, the little estate at Anathoth which had belonged to him, might be trodden down by the stranger, and he himself die in a foreign land; around him might be nothing but sin and decay, before him nothing but despair and ruin: yet still there was hope, joy, everlasting certainty for that poor, childless, captive old man; for he had found out that the Lord *still lived*, the Lord still reigned. He could not lie; he could not forget his people. Could a mother forget her sucking child? No. When the Jews turned to Him, He would still have mercy. His punishment of them was a sign that he still cared for them. If He had forgotten them, He would have let them go on triumphant in their iniquity. No. All these afflictions were meant to chasten them, teach them, bring them back to Him. It would be good for them, an actual blessing to them, to be taken away into captivity in Babylon. It might be hard to believe, but it must be true. The Lord of Israel, the Saviour-God, who had been caring for them so long, rising up early and sending His prophets to them, pleading with them as a father with his child, He would have mercy; He would teach them, in sorrow and slavery, the lesson

they were too rebellious and hard-hearted to learn in prosperity and freedom: that the Lord was their righteousness, and that there was no other name under heaven which could save them from the plague, and from the famine, from the swords of the Chaldeans, or from the division, and oppression, and brutishness, and manifold wickedness, which was their ruin. And then Jeremiah saw and felt—how we cannot tell—but there his words, the words of this text, stand to this day, to show that he did see and feel it, that some day or other, in God's good time, the Jews would have a true King—a very different king from Jehoiakim the tyrant—a son of David in a very different sense from what Jehoiakim was; that He would come, and must come, sooner or later, The unseen King, who had all along been governing Jews and heathens, and telling his prophets that Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, the Chaldee and the Persian, were his servants as well as they, and that all the nations of the earth could do but what he chose. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment on the earth."

This was the blessed knowledge which God gave Jeremiah in return for all the misery he had to endure in warning his countrymen of their sins. And this same blessed knowledge, the knowledge that the earth is the Lord's, that to Jesus Christ is given, as He said Himself, all power in heaven and earth, and that He is reigning, and must reign, and conquer, and triumph till He has put all His enemies under His feet, God will surely give to everyone, high or low, who follows Jeremiah's example, who boldly and faithfully warns the sinner of his way, who rebukes the wickedness which he sees around him: only he must do it in the

spirit of Jeremiah. He must not be insolent to the insolent, or proud to the proud. He must not be puffed up, and fancy that because he sees the evil of sin, and the certain ruin which is the fruit of it, that he is therefore to keep apart from his fellow-countrymen, and despise them in Pharisaic pride. No. The truly Christian man, the man who, like Jeremiah, has the Spirit of God in him, will feel the most intense pity and tenderness of sinners. He will not only rebuke the sins of his people, but mourn for them; he will be afflicted in all their affliction. However harshly he may have to speak, he will never forget that they are his countrymen, his brothers, children of the same Father, to be judged by the same Lord. He will feel with shame and fear that he has in himself the root of the very same sins which he sees working death around him—that if others are covetous, he might be so too—if they be profligate, and deceitful, and hypocritical, without God in the world, he might be so too. And he must feel not only that he might be as bad as his neighbours, but that he actually would be, if God withdrew His Spirit from him for a moment, and allowed him to forget the only faith which saves him from sin, loyalty to his unseen Saviour, the righteous King of kings. Therefore he will not only rebuke his sinful neighbours; but he will tell them, as Jeremiah told his countrymen, that all their sin and misery proceed from this one thing, that they have forgotten that the Lord is their King. He will pray daily for them, that the Lord their King may show Himself to their hearts and thoughts, and teach them all that He has done for them, and is doing for them; and may convert them to Himself that they may be truly His people, and His way may be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations.

XXX.

THE PERFECT KING.

Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.—MATTHEW xxi. 5.

You all know that this Sunday is called the First Sunday in Advent. You all know, I hope, that Advent means coming, and that these four Sundays before Christmas, as I have often told you, are called Advent Sundays, because upon them we are called to consider the coming of our King and Saviour Jesus Christ. If you will look at the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels for these next four Sundays, you will see at once that they all bear upon our Lord's coming. The Gospels tell us of the prophecies about Christ which He fulfilled when He came. The Epistles tell us what sort of men we ought to be, both clergy and people, because He has come and will come again. The Collects pray that the Spirit of God would make us fit to live and die in a world into which Christ has come, and in which He is ruling now, and to which He will come again. The text which I have taken this morning, you just heard in this Sunday's Gospel. St. Matthew tells you that Jesus Christ fulfilled it by riding into Jerusalem in state upon an ass's colt; and St. Matthew surely speaks truth. Let us consider what the prophecy is, and how Jesus Christ fulfilled it. Then we shall see and believe from the Epistle what effect the know-

ledge of it ought to have upon our own souls, and hearts, and daily conduct.

Now this prophecy, "Behold, thy king cometh unto thee," etc., you will find in your Bibles, in the ninth verse of the ninth chapter of the book of Zechariah. But I do not think that Zechariah wrote it. St. Matthew does not say he wrote it; he merely calls it that which was spoken by the prophet, without mentioning his name. Provided it is an inspired word from God, which it is, it perhaps does not matter to us so much who wrote it: but I think it was written by the prophet Jeremiah, perhaps in the beginning of the reign of the good king Josiah; for the chapter in which this text is, and the two or three chapters which follow, are not at all like the rest of Zechariah's writings, but exactly like Jeremiah's. They certainly seem to speak of things which did not happen in Zechariah's time, but in the time of Jeremiah, nearly ninety years before. And, above all, St. Matthew himself seems plainly to have thought that some part, at least, of those chapters was Jeremiah's writing; for in the twenty-seventh chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and in the ninth verse, you will find a prophecy about the potter's field, which St. Matthew says was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. Now, those words are not in the book of Jeremiah as it stands in our Bibles: but they are in the book of Zechariah, in the eleventh chapter, twelfth and thirteenth verses, coming shortly after my text, and making a part of the same prophecy. This has puzzled Christians very much, because it seemed as if St. Matthew has made a mistake, and miscalled Zechariah Jeremiah. But I believe firmly that, as we are bound to expect, St. Matthew made no mistake whatsoever, and that Jeremiah did write that prophecy as St. Matthew said, and the two

chapters before it, and perhaps the two after it, and that they were probably kept and preserved by Zechariah during the troublous times of the Babylonish captivity, and at last copied by Nehemiah into Zechariah's book of prophecy, where they stand now; and I think it is a comfort to know this, and to find that the evangelist St. Matthew has not made a mistake, but knew the Scriptures better than we do.

But I think Jeremiah having written this prophecy in my text, which I believe he did, is also very important, because it will show us what the prophet meant when he spoke it, and how it was fulfilled in his time; and the better we understand that, the better we shall understand how our blessed Lord fulfilled it afterwards.

Now, when Jeremiah was a young man, the Jews and their king Amon were in a state of most abominable wickedness. They were worshipping every sort of idol and false god. And the Bible, the book of God's law, was utterly unknown amongst them; so that Josiah the king, who succeeded Amon, had never seen or heard the book of the law of Moses, which makes part of our Old Testament, till he had reigned eighteen years, as you will find if you refer to 2 Kings xxii. 3. But this Josiah was a gentle and just prince, and finding the book of the law of God, and seeing the abominable forgetfulness and idolatry into which his people had fallen, utterly breaking the covenant which God had made with their forefathers when he brought them up out of Egypt—when he found the book of the law, I say, and all that he and his people should have done and had not done, and the awful curses which God threatened in that book against those who broke His law, "he humbled himself before God, because his heart was tender, and

turned to the Lord, as no king before him had ever turned," says the scripture, "with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might; so that there was no such king before him, or either after him." The history of the great reformation which this great and good king worked, you may read at length in 2 Kings xxii. xxiii. and 2 Chron. xxxiv. xxxv. which I advise you all to read.

And it appears to me that this prophecy in the text first applies to the gentle and holy king Josiah, the first true and good king the Jews had had for years, and the best they were ever to have till Christ came Himself; and that it speaks of Josiah coming to Jerusalem to restore the worship of God, not with pomp and show, like the wicked kings both before and after him, but in meekness and humbleness of heart, for all the sins of his people, as the prophetess said of him in 2 Kings xxii. 19, "that his heart was tender and humble before the Lord;" neither coming with chariots and guards, like a king and conqueror, but riding upon an ass's colt; for that was, in those countries, the ancient sign of a man's being a man of peace, and not of war; a magistrate and lawgiver, and not a soldier and a conqueror. Various places of holy scripture show us that this was the meaning of riding upon an ass in Judæa, just as it is in Eastern countries now.

But some may say, How then is this a prophecy? It merely tells us what good king Josiah was, and what every king ought to be. Well, my friends, that is just what makes it a prophecy. If it tells you what ought to be, it tells you what will be. Yes, never forget that; whatever ought to be, surely will be; as surely as this is God's earth and Christ's kingdom, and not the devil's.

Now, it does not matter in the least whether the prophet, when he spoke these words, knew that they would apply to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have no need whatsoever to suppose that he did: for scripture gives us no hint or warrant that he did; and if we have any real or honest reverence for scripture, we shall be careful to let it tell its own story, and believe that it contains all things necessary for salvation, without our patching our own notions into it over and above. Wise men are generally agreed that those old prophets did not, for the most part, comprehend the full meaning of their own words. Not that they were mere puppets and mouthpieces, speaking what to them was nonsense—God forbid!—But that just because they did thoroughly understand what was going on round them, and see things as God saw them, just because they had God's Eternal Spirit with them, therefore they spoke great and eternal words, which will be true for ever, and will go on for ever fulfilling themselves for more and more. For in proportion as any man's words are true, and wide, and deep, they are truer, and wider, and deeper than that man thinks, and will apply to a thousand matters of which he never dreamt. And so in all true and righteous speech, as in the speeches of the prophets of old, the glory is not man's who speaks them, but God's who reveals them, and who fulfils them again and again.

It is true, then, that this text describes what every king should be—gentle and humble, a merciful and righteous lawgiver, not a self-willed and capricious tyrant. But Josiah could not fulfil that. He was a good king: but he could not be a perfect one; for he was but a poor, sinful, weak, and inconsistent man, as we are. But those words being inspired by the Holy Spirit, must be fulfilled. There ought to be a perfect

king, perfectly gentle and humble, having a perfect salvation, a perfect lawgiver; and therefore there must be such a king; and therefore St. Matthew tells us there came at last a perfect king—one who fulfilled perfectly the prophet's words—one who was not made king of Jerusalem, but was her King from the beginning; for that is the full meaning of "Thy King cometh to thee." To Jerusalem He came, riding on the ass's colt, like the peaceful and fatherly judges of old time, for a sign to the poor souls round Him, who had no lawgivers but the proud and fierce Scribes and Pharisees, no king but the cruel and godless Cæsar, and his oppressive and extortionate officers and troops. Meek and lowly He came; and for once the people saw that He was the true Son of David—a man and king, like him, after God's own heart. For once they felt that He had come in the name of the Lord the old Deliverer who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and made them into a nation, and loved and pitied them still, in spite of all their sins, and remembered His covenant, which they had forgotten. And before that humble man, the Son of the village maiden, they cried: "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest."

And do you think He came, the true and perfect King, only to go away again and leave this world as it was before, without a law, a ruler, a heavenly kingdom? God forbid! Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. What He was then, when He rode in triumph into Jerusalem, that is He now to us this day—a king, meek and lowly, and having salvation; the head and founder of a kingdom which can never be moved, a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. To that kingdom this land of England now

belongs. Into it we, as Englishmen, have been christened. And the unchristened, though they know not of it, belong to it as well. What God's will, what Christ's mercies may be to them, we know not. That He has mercy for them, if their ignorance is not their own fault, we doubt not; perhaps, even if their ignorance be their own fault, we need not doubt that He has mercy for them, considering the mercy which He has shown to us, who deserved no more than they. But His will to us we do know; and His will is this—our holiness. For He came not only to assert His own power, to redeem his own world, but to set His people, the children of men, an example, that they should follow in His steps. Herein, too, He is the perfect king. He leads His subjects, He sets a perfect example to His subjects, and more, He inspires them with the power of following that example, as, if you will think, a perfect ruler ought to be able to do. Josiah set the Jews an example, but he could not make them follow it. They turned to God at the bidding of their good king, with their lips, in their outward conduct; but their hearts were still far from Him. Jeremiah complains bitterly of this in the beginning of his prophecies. He complains that Josiah's reformation was after all empty, hollow, hypocritical, a change on the surface only, while the wicked root was left. They had healed, he said, the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly, crying, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace." But Jesus, the perfect King, is King of men's spirits as well as of their bodies. He can turn the heart, He can renew the soul. None so ignorant, none so sinful, none so crushed down with evil habits, but the Lord will and can forgive him, raise him up, enlighten him, strengthen him, if he will but claim his share in his King's mercy, his citizenship in the

heavenly kingdom, and so put himself in tune again with himself, and with heaven, and earth, and all therein.

Keeping in mind these things, that Jesus, because He is our perfect King, is both the example and the inspirer of our souls and characters, we may look without fear at the epistle for the day, where it calls on us to be very different persons from what we are, and declares to us our duty as subjects of Him who is meek and lowly, just and having salvation. It is no superstitious, slavish message, saying: "You have lost Christ's mercy and Christ's kingdom; you must buy it back again by sacrifices, and tears, and hard penances, or great alms-deeds and works of mercy." No. It simply says: "You belong to Christ already, give up your hearts to Him and follow His example. If He is perfect, His is the example to follow; if he is perfect, His commandments must be perfect, fit for all places, all times, all employments; if He is the King of heaven and earth, His commandments must be in tune with heaven and earth, with the laws of nature, the true laws of society and trade, with the constitution, and business, and duty, and happiness of all mankind, and for ever obey Him."

Owe no man anything save love, for He owed no man anything. He gave up all, even His own rights, for a time, for His subjects. Will you pretend to follow Him while you hold back from your brothers and fellow-servants their just due? One debt you must always owe; one debt will grow the more you pay it, and become more delightful to owe, the greater and heavier you feel it to be, and that is love; love to all around you, for all around you are your brothers and sisters; all around you are the beloved subjects of your King and Saviour. Love them as

you love yourself, and then you cannot harm them, you cannot tyrannise over them, you cannot wish to rise by scrambling up on their shoulders, taking the bread out of their mouths, making your profit out of their weakness and their need. This, St. Paul says, was the duty of men in his time, because the night of heathendom was far spent, the day of Christianity and the Church was at hand. Much more is it our duty now—our duty, who have been born in the full sunshine of Christianity, christened into His church as children, we and our fathers before us, for generations, of the kingdom of God. Ay, my friends, these words, that kingdom, that King, witness this day against this land of England. Not merely against popery, the mote which we are trying to take out of the foreigner's eye, but against Mammon, the beam which we are overlooking in our own. Owe no man anything save love. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That is the law of your King, who loved not Himself or His own profit, His own glory, but gave Himself even to death for those who had forgotten Him and rebelled against Him. That law witnesses against selfishness and idleness in rich and poor. It witnesses against the employer who grinds down his workmen; who, as the world tells him he has a right to do, takes advantage of their numbers, their ignorance, their low and reckless habits, to rise upon their fall, and grow rich out of their poverty. It witnesses against the tradesman who tries to draw away his neighbour's custom. It witnesses against the working man who spends in the alehouse the wages which might support and raise his children, and then falls back recklessly and dishonestly on the parish rates and the alms of the charitable. Against them all this law witnesses. These things are unfit for the kingdom of Christ, contrary to

the laws and constitution thereof, hateful to the King thereof; and if a nation will not amend these abominations, the King will arise out of His place, and with sore judgments and terrible He will visit His land and purify His temple, saying: "My Father's house should be a house of prayer, and ye have made it a den of thieves." Ay, woe to any soul, or to any nation, which, instead of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, copying His example, obeying His laws, and living worthy of His kingdom, not only in the church, but in the market, the shop, the senate, or the palace, give themselves up to covetousness, which is idolatry; and care only to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Woe to them; for, let them be what they will, their King cannot change. He is still meek and lowly; He is still just and having salvation; and He will purge out of His kingdom all that is not like Himself, the unchaste and the idle, the unjust and the unmerciful, and the covetous man, who is an idolater, says the scripture, though he may call himself seven times a Protestant, and rail at the Pope in public meetings, while he justifies greediness and tyranny by glib words about the necessities of business and the laws of trade, and by philosophy falsely so called, which cometh not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. Such a man loves and makes a lie, and the Lord of truth will surely send him to his own place.

XXXI.

GOD'S WARNINGS.

It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.—JEREMIAH xxxvi. 3.

THE first lesson for this evening's service tells us of the wickedness of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. How, when Jeremiah's prophecies against the sins of Jehoiakim and his people were read before him, he cut the roll with a penknife, and threw it into the fire. Now, we must not look on this story as one which, because it happened among the Jews many hundred years ago, has nothing to do with us; for, as I continually remind you, the history of the Jews, and the whole Old Testament, is the history of God's dealings with man—the account of God's plan of governing this world. Now, God cannot change; but is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and therefore His plan of government cannot change: but if men do as those did of whom we read in the Old Testament, God will surely deal with them as He dealt with the men of the Old Testament. This St. Paul tells us most plainly in the tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, where he says that the whole history of the Jews was written for our example—that is for the example of those Christian Corinthians, who were not Jews at all, but Gentiles as we are; and therefore for our example also.

He tells them, that it was Christ Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, who fed and guided the old Jews in the wilderness, and that the Lord will deal with us exactly as He dealt with the old Jews.

Therefore it is a great and fearful mistake, to suppose that because the Jews were a peculiar people and God's chosen nation, that therefore the Lord's way of governing them is in any wise different from His way of governing us English at this very day; for that fancy is contrary to the express words of Holy Scripture, in a hundred different places; it is contrary to the whole spirit of our Prayer Book, which is written all through on the belief that the Lord deals with us just as He did with the Jewish nation, and which will not even make sense if it be understood in any other way; and besides, it is most dangerous to the souls and consciences of men. It is most dangerous for us to fancy that God can change; for if God can change, right and wrong can change; for right is the will of God, and wrong is what is against His will; and if we once let into our hearts the notion that God can change His laws of right, our consciences will become daily dimmer and more confused about right and wrong, till we fall, as too many do, under the prophet's curse, "Woe to them who call good evil, and evil good; who put sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet," and fancy, like Ezekiel's Jews, that God's ways are unequal; that is, unlike each other, changeable, arbitrary, and capricious, doing one thing at one time, and another at another. No. It is sinful man who is changeable; it is sinful man who is arbitrary. But The Lord is not a man, that He should lie or repent; for He is the only-begotten Son, and therefore the express likeness, of The Everlasting Father, in whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.

But some may say, Is not that a gloomy and terrible notion of God, that He cannot change His purpose? Is not that as much as to say that there is a dark necessity hanging over each of us; that a man must just be what God chooses, and do just what He has ordained to do, and go to everlasting happiness or misery exactly as God has foreordained from all eternity, so that there is no use trying to do right, or not to do wrong? If I am to be saved, say such people, I shall be saved whether I try or not; and if I am to be damned, I shall be damned whether I try or not. I am in God's hands like clay in the hands of the potter; and what I am like is therefore God's business, and not mine.

No, my friends, the very texts in the Bible which tell us that God cannot change or repent, tell us what it is that He cannot change in — in showing loving-kindness and tender mercy, long-suffering, and repenting of the evil. Whatsoever else He cannot repent of, He cannot repent of repenting of the evil.

It is true, we are in His hand as clay in the hand of the potter. But it is a sad misreading of scripture to make that mean that we are to sit with our hands folded, careless about our own way and conduct; still less that we are to give ourselves up to despair, because we have sinned against God; for what is the very verse which follows after that? Listen. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a kingdom, to pull down and destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do to them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and

concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them."

So that the lesson which we are to draw from the parable of the potter's clay is just the exact opposite which some men draw. Not that God's decrees are absolute: but that they are conditional, and depend on our good or evil conduct. Not that His election or His reprobation are unalterable, but that they alter "at that instant" at which man alters. Not that His grace and will are irresistible, as the foolish man against whom St. Paul argues fancies: but that we can resist God's will, and that our destruction comes only by resisting His will; in short, that God's will is no brute material necessity and fate, but the will of a living, loving Father.

And the very same lesson is taught us in Ezek. xviii., of which I spoke just now; for if we read that chapter we shall find that the Jews had a false notion of God that He had changed His character, and had become in their time unmerciful and unjust. They fancied that God was, if I may so speak, obstinate—that if His anger had once arisen, there was no turning it away, but that He would go on without pity, punishing the innocent children for their father's sin; and therefore they fancied God's ways were unfair, self-willed, and arbitrary, without any care of what sort of person He afflicted; punishing the righteous as well as the wicked, after He had promised in His law to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. They fancied that His way of governing the world had changed, and that He did not in their days make a difference between the bad and the good. Therefore Ezekiel says to them: "When the righteous man

turneth away from his righteousness, he shall die." "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, he shall live." "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"

This, then, is the good news, that God is love; love when He punishes, and love when He forgives; very pitiful, and full of long-suffering and tender mercy and repenting Him, never of the good, but only of the evil which He threatens.

Both Jeremiah, therefore, and Ezekiel, give us the same lesson. God does not change, and therefore He never changes His mercy and His justice: for He is merciful because He is just. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. That is His everlasting law, and has been from the beginning: Punishment, sure and certain, for those who do not repent; and free forgiveness, sure and certain also, for those who do repent.

So He spoke to Jeremiah in the time of Jehoiakim: "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do to them; that I may forgive them their iniquity and their sin." The Lord, you see, wishes to forgive—longs to forgive. His heart yearns over sinful men as a father's over his rebellious child. But if they will still rebel, if they will still turn their wicked wills away from Him, He must punish. Why we know not; but He knows. Punish He must, unless we repent—unless we turn our wills toward His will. And woe to the stiff-necked and stout-hearted man who, like the wicked king Jehoiakim, sets his face like a flint against God's warnings. How many, how many behave for years, Sunday after Sunday, just as king Jehoiakim did! When he heard that God had threatened him with ruin

for his sins, he heard also that God offered him free pardon if he would repent. Jeremiah gave him free choice to be saved or to be ruined; but his heart and will were hardened. Hearing that he was wrong only made him angry. His pride and self-will were hurt by being told that he must change and alter his ways. He had chosen his way, and he would keep to it; and he cared nothing for God's offers of forgiveness, because he could not be forgiven unless he did what he was too proud to do, confess himself to be in the wrong, and openly alter his conduct. And how many, as I first said, are like him! They come to church; they hear God's warnings and threats against their evil ways; they hear God's offers of free pardon and forgiveness; but being told that they are in the wrong makes them too angry to care for God's offers of pardon. Pride stops their ears. They have chosen their own way, and they will keep it. They would not object to be forgiven, if they might be forgiven without repenting. But they do not like to confess themselves in the wrong. They do not like to face their foolish companions' remarks and sneers about their changed ways. They do not like even good people to say of them: "You see now that you were in the wrong after all; for you have altered your mind and your doings yourself, as we told you you would have to do." No; anything sooner than confess themselves in the wrong; and so they turn their backs on God's mercy, for the sake of their own carnal pride and self-will.

But, of course, they want an excuse for doing that; and when a man wants an excuse, the devil will soon fit him with a good one. Then, perhaps, the foolish sinner behaves as Jehoiakim did. He tries to forget God's message in the man who brings it. He grows angry with the preacher, or goes out

and laughs at the preacher when service is over, as if it was the preacher's fault that God had declared what he has; as if it was the preacher's doing that God has revealed His anger against all sin and unrighteousness. So he acts like Jehoiakim, who tried to take Jeremiah the prophet and punish *him*, for what not he but the Lord God had declared. Nay, they will often peevishly hate the very sight of a good book, because it reminds them of the sins of which they do not choose to be reminded, just as the young king Jehoiakim was childish enough to vent his spite on Jeremiah's book of prophecies, by cutting the roll on which it was written with a penknife, and throwing it into the fire. So do sinners who are angry with the preacher who warns them, or hate the sight of good books. But let such foolish and wilful sinners, such full-grown children—for, after all, they are no better—hear the word of the Lord which came to Jehoiakim: "As it is written, he that despiseth Me shall be despised, saith the Lord." And let them not fancy that their shutting their ears will shut the preacher's mouth, still less shut up God's everlasting laws of punishment for sin. No. God's word stands true, and it will happen to them as it did to Jehoiakim. His burning Jeremiah's book did not rid him of the book, or save him from the woe and ruin which was prophesied in it; for we have Jeremiah's book here in our Bibles to this day, as a sign and a warning of what happens to men, be they young or old, be they kings or labouring men, who fight against God. Jeremiah's words were not lost after all; they were all re-written, and there were added to them also many more like words; for Jehoiakim, by refusing the Lord's offer of pardon, had added to his sins, and therefore the Lord added to his punishment.

Perhaps, again, the devil finds the wilful sinner

another excuse, and the man says to himself, as the Jews did in Ezekiel's time: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. It is not my own fault that I am living a bad life, but other people's. My parents ought to have brought me up better. I have had no chance. My companions taught me too much harm. I have too much trouble to get my living; or, I was born with a bad temper; or, I can't help running after pleasure. Why did God make me the sort of man I am, and put me where I am? God is hard upon me; He is unfair to me. His ways are unequal; He expects as much of me as He does of people who have more opportunities. He threatens to punish me for other people's sins."

And then comes another and a darker temptation over the man, and the devil whispers to him such thoughts as these: "God does not care for me; God hates me. Luck, and everything else is against me. There seems to be some curse upon me. Why should I change? Let God change first to me, and then I will change toward Him. But God will not change; He is determined to have no mercy on me. I can see that; for everything goes wrong with me. Then what use in my repenting? I will just go my own way, and what must be must. There is no resisting God's will. If I am to be saved, I shall be; if I am to be damned, I shall be. I will put all melancholy thoughts out of my head, and go and enjoy myself and forget all. At all events, it won't last long: 'Let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die.'"

Oh, my dear friends, have not some of you sometimes had such thoughts? Then hear the word of the Lord to you: "When—whensoever—whensoever—the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "Have

I any pleasure in the death of him that dieth? saith the Lord, and not rather that he should be converted, and live?" True, most true, that the Lord is unchangeable: but it is in love and mercy. True, that God's will and law cannot alter: but what is God's will and law? The soul that sinneth, it shall die? Yes. But also, the soul that turneth away from its sin, it shall live. Never believe the devil when he tells you that God hates you. Never believe him when he tells you that God has been too hard on you, and put you into such temptation, or ignorance, or poverty, or anything else, that you cannot mend. No. That font there will give the devil the lie. That font says: "Be you poor, tempted, ignorant, stupid, be you what you will, you are God's child—your Father's love is over you, His mercy is ready for you." You feel too weak to change; ask God's Spirit, and He will give you a strength of mind you never felt before. You feel too proud to change; ask God's Spirit, and He will humble your proud heart, and soften your hard heart; and you will find to your surprise, that when your pride is gone, when you are utterly ashamed of yourself, and see your sins in their true blackness, and feel not worthy to look up to God, that then, instead of pride, will come a nobler, holier, manlier feeling—self-respect, and a clear conscience, and the thought that, weak and sinful as you are, you are in the right way; that God, and the angels of God, are smiling on you; that you are in tune again with all heaven and earth, because you are what God wills you to be—not His proud, peevish, self-willed child, fancying yourself strong enough to go alone, when in reality you are the slave of your own passions and appetites, and the plaything of the devil: but His loving, loyal son, strong in the strength which God gives you, and able to do what you will, because what you will God wills also.

XXXII.

PHARAOH'S HEART.

And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.—EXODUS ix. 17.

WHAT lesson, now, can we draw from this story? One, at least, and a very important one. What effect did all these signs and wonders of God's sending, have upon Pharaoh and his servants? Did they make them better men or worse men? We read that they made them worse men; that they helped to harden their hearts. We read that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go. Now, how did the Lord do that? He did not wish and mean to make Pharaoh more hard-hearted, more wicked. That is impossible. God, who is all goodness and love, never can wish to make any human being one atom worse than he is. He who so loved the world that He came down on earth to die for sinners, and take away the sins of the world, would never make any human being a greater sinner than he was before. That is impossible, and horrible to think of. Therefore, when we read that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, we must be certain that that was Pharaoh's own fault; and so, we read, it was Pharaoh's own fault. The Lord did not bring all these plagues on Egypt without giving Pharaoh fair warning. Before each plague, He sent Moses to tell Pharaoh that the plague was coming. The Lord told Pharaoh that He

was his Master, and the Master and Lord of the whole earth; that the children of Israel belonged to Him, and the Egyptians too; that the river, light and darkness, the weather, the crops, and the insects, and the locusts belonged to Him; that all diseases which afflict man and beast were in His power. And the Lord proved that His words were true, in a way Pharaoh could not mistake, by changing the river into blood, and sending darkness, and hailstones, and plagues of lice and flies, and at last by killing the firstborn of all the Egyptians. The Lord gave Pharaoh every chance; He condescended to argue with him as one man would with another, and proved His word to be true, and proved that He had a right to command Pharaoh. And therefore, I say, if Pharaoh's heart was hardened, it was his own fault, for the Lord was plainly trying to soften it, and to bring him to reason. And the Bible says distinctly that it was Pharaoh's own fault. For it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, he and his servants, and therefore they would not let the children of Israel go. Now how could Pharaoh harden his own heart, and yet the Lord harden it at the same time?

Just in the same way, my friends, as too many of us are apt to make the Lord harden our hearts by hardening them ourselves, and to make, as Pharaoh did, the very things which the Lord sends to soften us, the causes of our becoming more stubborn; the very things which the Lord sends to bring us to reason, the means of our becoming more mad and foolish. Believe me, my friends, this is no old story with which we have nothing to do. What happened to Pharaoh's heart may happen to yours, or mine, or any man's. Alas! alas! it does happen to many a man's and woman's heart every day—and may the

Lord have mercy on them before it be too late,—and yet how can the Lord have mercy on those who will not let Him have mercy on them?

What do I mean? This is what I mean, my friends; Oh, listen to it, and take it solemnly to heart, you who are living still in sin; take it to heart, lest you, like Pharaoh, die in your sins, and your latter end will be worse than your beginning.

Suppose a man to be going on in some sinful habit; cheating his neighbours, grinding his labourers, or getting tipsy, or living with a woman without being married to her. He comes to church, and there he hears the word of the Lord, by the Bible, or in sermons, telling him that God commands him to give up his sin, that God will certainly punish him if he does not repent and amend. God sends that message to him in love and mercy, to soften his heart by the terrors of the law, and turn him from his sin. But what does the man feel? He feels angry, and provoked; angry with the preacher; ay, angry with the Bible itself, with God's words. For he hates to hear the words which tell him of his sin; he wishes they were not in the Bible; he longs to stop the preacher's mouth; and, as he cannot do that, he dislikes going to church. He says: "I cannot, and what is more, I will not, give up my sinful ways, and therefore I shall not go to church to be told of them." So he stops away from church, and goes on in his sins. So that man's heart is hardened, just as Pharaoh's was. Yet the Lord has come and spoken to that sinful man in loving warnings: though all the effect it has had is that the Lord's message has made him worse than he was before, more stubborn, more godless, more unwilling to hear what is good. But men may fall into a still worse state of mind. They may determine to

set the Lord at naught; to hear Him speaking to their conscience, and know that He is right and they wrong, and yet quietly put the good thoughts and feelings out of their way, and go in the course which they know to be the worst. How many a man in business or the world says to himself, ay, and in his better moments will say to his friend: "Ah, yes, if one could but be what one would wish to be. . . . What one's mother used to say one might be. . . . But for such a world as this, the gospel ideal is somewhat too fine and unpractical. One has one's business to carry on, or one's family to provide for, or one's party in politics to serve; one must obey the laws of trade, the usages of society, the interests of one's class;" and so forth. And so an excuse is found for every sin, by those who know in their hearts that they are sinning; for every sin; and among others, too often, for that sin of Pharaoh's, of "*not letting the people go.*"

And how many, my friends, when they come to church, harden their hearts in the same quiet, almost good-humoured way, not caring enough for God's message to be even angry with it, and take the preacher's warnings as they would a shower of rain, as something unpleasant which cannot be helped; and which, therefore, they must sit out patiently, and think about it as little as possible? And when the sermon is over, they take their hats and go out into the churchyard, and begin talking about something else as quickly as possible, to drive the unpleasant thoughts, if there are a few left, out of their heads. And thus they let the Lord's message to them harden their hearts. For it does harden them, my friends, if it be taken in this temper. Every time anyone sits through the service or the sermon in this stupid and careless mood, he dulls and deadens his soul, till at

last he is able coolly to sit through the most awful warnings of God's judgment, the most tender entreaties of God's love, as if he were a brute animal without understanding. Ay, he is able to make the responses to the commandments, and join in the psalms, and so with his own mouth, before the whole congregation, confess that God's curse is on his doings, with no more sense or care of what the words mean, and of what a sentence he is pronouncing against himself, than if he were a parrot taught to speak by rote words which he does not understand. And so that man, by hardening his own heart, makes the Lord harden it for him.

But there is a third way, and a worse way still, in which people's hearts are hardened by the Lord's speaking to them. A man is warned of his sins by the preacher; and he says to himself: "If the minister thinks that he is going to frighten me away from church, he is very much mistaken. He may go his way, and I shall go mine. Let him preach at me as much as he will; I shall go to church all the more for that, to show him that I am not afraid." And so the Lord's warnings harden his heart, and provoke him to set his face like a flint, and become all the more proud and stubborn.

Now, young people, I speak openly to you as man to man. Will you tell me that this was not the very way in which some of you took my sermon last Sunday afternoon, in which I warned you of the misery which your sinful lives would bring upon you? Was there not more than one of you, who, as soon as he got outside the church, began laughing and swaggering, and said to the lad next him: "Well, he gave it us well in his sermon this afternoon, did he not? But I don't care; do you?"

To which the other foolish fellow answered: "Not

I. It is his business to talk like that; he is paid for it, and I suppose he likes it. So if he does what he likes, we shall do what we like. Come along." And at that all the other foolish fellows round burst out laughing, as if the poor lad had said a very clever thing; and they all went off together, having their hearts hardened by the Lord's warning to them, as Pharaoh's was.

And they showed, I am afraid, that very evening that their hearts were hardened. For out of a sort of spite and stubbornness they took a delight in doing what was wrong, just because they had been told that it was wrong, and because they were determined to show that they would not be frightened or turned from what they chose.

And all the while they knew that it was wrong, did those poor foolish lads. If you had asked one of them openly, "Do you not know that God has forbidden you to do this?" they would have either been forced to say, "Yes," or else they would have tried to laugh the matter off, or perhaps held their tongues and looked silly, or perhaps again answered insolently; showing by each and all of these ways of taking it, that the Lord's message had come home to their consciences, and convinced them of their sin, though they were determined not to own it or obey it. And the way they would have put the matter by and excused themselves to themselves would have been just the way in which Pharaoh did it. They would have tried to forget that the Lord had warned them, and tried to make out to themselves that it was all the preacher's doing, and to make it a personal quarrel between him and them. Just so Pharaoh did when he hardened his heart. He made the Lord's message a ground for hating and threatening Moses and Aaron, as if it was any fault of theirs. He

knew in his heart that the Lord had sent them; but he tried to forget that, and drove them out from his presence, and told them that if they dared to appear before him again they should surely die. And just so, my friends, people will be angry with the preacher for telling them unpleasant truths, as if it was any more pleasure to him to speak than for them to hear. Oh, why will you forget that the words which I speak from this pulpit are not my words, but God's? It is not I who warn you of what you are bringing on yourselves by your sins, it is God Himself. There it is written in His Bible—judge for yourselves. Read your Bibles for yourselves, and you will see that I am not speaking my own thoughts and words. And as for being angry with me for telling you truth, read the ordination service which is read whenever a clergyman is ordained, and judge for yourselves. What is a clergyman sent into the world for at all, but to say to you what I am saying now? What should I be but a hypocrite and a traitor to the blessed Lord who died for me, and saved me from my sins, and ordained me to preach to sinners, that they too may be saved from their sins,—what should I be but a traitor to Him, if I did not say to you, whenever I see you going wrong:

"O come, let us worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

"For He is the Lord our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

"To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts,

"Lest He sware in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest!"

And now, my friends, I will tell you what will happen to you. You see that I know something, without having been told of what has been going on in your

hearts. I beseech you, believe me when I tell you what will go on in them. God will chastise you for your sins. He will; just because He loves you, and does not hate you; just because you are His children, and not dumb animals born to perish. Troubles will come upon you as you grow older. Of what sort they will be I cannot tell; but that they will come, I can tell full well. And when the Lord sends trouble to you, shall it harden your hearts or soften them? It depends on you, altogether on you, whether the Lord hardens your hearts by sending those sorrows, or whether He softens and turns them and brings them back to the only right place for them—home to Him. But your trouble may only harden your heart all the more. The sorrows and sore judgments which the Lord sent Pharaoh only hardened his heart. It all depends upon the way in which you take these troubles, my friends. And that not so much when they come as after they come. Almost all, let their hearts be right with God or not, seem to take sorrow as they ought, while the sorrow is on them. Pharaoh did so too. He said to Moses and Aaron: "I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go." What could be more right or better spoken? Was not Pharaoh in a proper state of mind then? Was not his heart humbled, and his will resigned to God? Moses thought not. For while he promised Pharaoh to pray that the storm might pass over, yet he warned him: "But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord your God." And so it happened; for, "when Pharaoh saw that the rain, and hail, and thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. Neither would he let the children of Israel

go." . . . And so, alas! it happens to many a man and woman nowadays. They find themselves on a sick-bed. They are in fear of death, in fear of poverty, in fear of shame and punishment for their misdeeds. And then they say: "It is God's judgment. I have been very wicked. I know God is punishing me. Oh, if God will but raise me up off this sick-bed; if He will but help me out of this trouble, I will give up all my wicked ways. I will repent and amend." So said Pharaoh; and yet, as soon as he was safe out of his distress, he hardened his heart. And so does many a man and woman, who, when they get safe through their troubles, never give up one of their sins, any more than Pharaoh did. They really believe that God has punished them. They really intend to amend, while they are in the trouble: but as soon as they are out of it, they try to persuade themselves that it was not God who sent the sorrow, that it came "by accident," or that "people must have trouble in this life," or that "if they had taken better care, they might have prevented it."—All of them excuses to themselves for forgetting God in the matter, and, therefore, for forgetting what they promised to God in trouble; and so, after all, they go on just as they went on before. And yet not as they went on before. For every such sin hardens their hearts; every such sin makes them less able to see God's hand in what happens to them; every such sin makes them more bold and confident in disobeying God, and saying to themselves: "After all, why should I be so frightened when I am in trouble, and make such promises to amend my life? For the trouble goes away, whether I mend my life or not; and nothing happens to me; God does not punish me for not keeping my promises to Him. I may as well go on in my own way, for I seem not the worse off in body or in purse for so doing." Thus do people

harden their hearts after each trouble, as Pharaoh did; so that you will see people, by one affliction after another, one loss after another, all their lives through, warned by God that sin will not prosper them; and confessing that their sins have brought God's punishment on them: and yet going on steadily in the very sins which have brought on their troubles, and gaining besides, as time runs on, a heart more and more hardened. And why?

Because they, like Pharaoh, love to have their own way. They will not submit to God, and do what He bids them, and believe that what He bids them must be right—good for them, and for all around them.

They promised to mend. But they promised as Pharaoh did. "If God will take away this trouble, then I will mend"—meaning, though they do not dare to say it: "And if God will not take away this trouble, of course He cannot expect me to mend." In plain English—If God will not act toward them as they like, then they will not act toward Him as He likes. My friends, God does not need us to bargain with Him. We must obey Him whether we like it or not; whether it seems to pay us or not; whether He takes our trouble off us or not; we must obey, for He is the Lord; and if we will not obey, He will prove His power on us, as He did on Pharaoh, by showing plainly what is the end of those who resist His will.

What, then, are we to do when our sins bring us, as they certainly will some day bring us, into trouble?

What we ought to have done at first, my friends. What we ought to have done in the wild days of youth, and so have saved ourselves many a dark day, many a sleepless night, many a bitter shame and heartache. To open our eyes, and see that the only thing for men and women, whom God has made, is to obey the God

who has made them. He is the Lord. He has made us. He will have us do one thing. How can we hope to prosper by doing anything else? It is ill fighting against God. Which is the stronger, my friends, you or God? Make up your minds on that. It surely will not take you long.

But someone may say: "I do wish and long to obey God; but I am so weak, and my sins have so entangled me with bad company, or debts, or—, or—." We all know, alas! into what a net everyone who gives way to sin gets his feet: "And therefore I cannot obey God. I long to do so. I feel, I know, when I look back, that all my sin, and shame, and unhappiness, come from being proud and self-willed, and determined to have my own way, and do what I choose. But I cannot mend." Do not despair, poor soul! I had a thousand times sooner hear you say you cannot mend, than that you can. For those who say they can mend, are apt to say: "I can mend; and therefore I shall mend when I choose, and no sooner." But those who really feel they cannot mend—those who are really weary and worn out with the burden of their sins—those who are really tired out with their own wilfulness, and feel ready to lie down and die, like a spent horse, and say: "God, take me away, no matter to what place; I am not fit to live here on earth, a shame and a torment to myself day and night"—those who are in that state of mind, are very near—very near finding out glorious news.

Those who cannot mend themselves and know it, God will mend. God will mend your lives for you. He knows as well as you what you have to struggle against; ay, a thousand times better. He knows—what does He not know? Pray to Him, and try what He does not know. Cry to Him to rid you of your bad

companions; He will find a way of doing it. Cry to Him to bring you out of the temptations you feel too strong for you; He will find a way for doing it. Cry to Him to teach you what you ought to do, and He will send someone, and that the right person, doubt it not, to teach you in His own good time. Above all, cry and pray to Him to conquer the pride, and self-conceit, and wilfulness in your heart; to take the hard proud heart of stone out of you, and give you instead a heart of flesh, loving, and tender, and kindly to every human creature; and He will do it. Cry to Him to make your will like His own will, that you may love what He loves, and hate what He hates, and do what He wishes you to do. And then you will surely find my words come true: "Those who long to mend, and yet know that they cannot mend themselves, let them but pray, and God will mend them."

XXXIII.

THE RED SEA TRIUMPH.

Preached Easter-day Morning, 1852.

This is a night to be much observed unto the Lord, for bringing the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.—EXODUS xii. 42.

YOU all, my friends, know what is the meaning of Easter-day—that it is the Day on which The Lord rose again from the dead. You must have seen that most of the special services for this day, the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, and the second lessons, both morning and evening, reminded you of Christ's rising again; and so did the proper Psalms for this day, though it may seem at first sight more difficult to see what they have to do with the Lord's rising again.

Now the first lessons, both for the morning and evening services, were also meant to remind us of the very same thing, though it may seem even more difficult still, at first sight, to understand how they do so.

Let us see what these two first lessons are about. The morning one was from the twelfth chapter of Exodus, and told us what the Passover was, and what it meant. The first lesson for this afternoon was the fourteenth chapter of Exodus. Surely you must remember it. Surely the most careless of you must have listened to that glorious story, how the Jews went through the Red Sea as if it had been dry land, while Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, trying to follow them,

were overwhelmed in the water. Surely you cannot have heard how the poor Jews looked back from the farther shore, and hardly believed their own eyes for joy and wonder, when they saw their proud masters swept away for ever, and themselves safe and free out of the hateful land where they had been slaves for hundreds of years. You cannot surely, my friends, have heard that glorious story, and forgotten it again already. I hope not; for God knows, that tale of the Jews coming safe through the Red Sea has a deep and blessed meaning enough for you, if you could but see it.

But some of you may be saying to yourselves: "No doubt it is a very noble story; and a man cannot help rejoicing at the poor Jews' escape, and at the downfall of those cruel Egyptians. It is a pleasant thought, no doubt, that if it were but for that once, God interfered to help poor suffering creatures, and rid them of their tyrants. But what has that to do with Easter Day and Christ's rising again?"

I will try to show you, my friends. The Jews' Passover is the same as our Easter-day, as you know already. But they are not merely alike in being kept on the same day. They are alike because they are both of them remembrances and tokens of the Lord Jesus Christ's delivering men out of misery and slavery. For never forget—though, indeed, in these strange times, I ought rather to say, I beseech you to read your Bibles and see—that it was Jesus Christ Himself who brought the Jews out of Egypt. St. Paul tells us so positively, again and again. In 1 Cor. x. 4 he tells us that it was Christ who followed them through the wilderness. In verse 9 of the same chapter, he says that it was Christ Himself whom they tempted in the wilderness. He was the Angel of the Covenant who went with them. He was the God of

Israel whom the elders of the Jews saw, a few weeks afterwards, on Mount Sinai, and under His feet a pavement like a sapphire stone. True, the Lord did not take flesh upon Him till nearly two thousand years after. But from the very beginning of all things, while He was in the bosom of the Father, He was the King of men. Man was made in His image, and therefore in the image of the Father, whose perfect likeness He is—"the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." It was He who took care of men, guided and taught them, and delivered them out of misery, from the very beginning of the world. St. Paul says the same thing, in many different ways, all through the epistle to the Hebrews. He says, for instance, that Moses, when he fled from Pharaoh's court in Egypt, esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. The Lord said the same thing of Himself. He said openly that He was the person who is called, all through the Old Testament, "The Lord." He asked the Pharisees: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto Him, David's son. Christ answered, How then does David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool?" So did Christ declare, that He Himself, who was standing there before them, was the Lord of David, who had died hundreds of years before. He told them again that their father Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and saw it and was glad; and when they answered, in anger and astonishment, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." *I am.* The Jews had no doubt whom He meant; and we

ought to have none either. For that was the very name by which God had told Moses to call Him, when he was sent to the Jews: "Thou shalt say unto them, I AM hath sent me to you." The Jews, I say, had no doubt who Jesus said that He was; that He meant them to understand, once and for all, that He whom they called the carpenter's son of Nazareth, was the Lord God who brought their forefathers up out of the land of Egypt, on the night of the first Passover. So they, to show how reverent and orthodox they were, and how they honoured the name of God, took up stones to stone Him—as many a man, who fancies himself orthodox and reverent, would now, if he dared, stone the preachers who declare that the Lord Jesus Christ is not changed since then; that He is as able and as willing as ever to deliver the poor from those who grind them down, and that He will deliver them, whenever they cry to Him, with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm, and that Easter-day is as much a sign of that to us as the Passover was for the Jews of old.

But, my friends, if Christ the Lord showed His love and power in behalf of poor oppressed wretches on that first Passover, surely He showed it a thousand times more on that first Easter-day. His great love helped the Jews out of slavery; and that same great love of His at this Easter-tide, moved Him to die and rise again for the sins of the whole world. In that first Passover He delivered only one people. On the first Easter He delivered all mankind. The Jews were under cruel tyrants in the land of Egypt. So were all mankind over the world, when Jesus came. The Jews in Egypt were slaves to worse things than the whip of their task-masters; they had slaves' hearts, as well as slaves' bodies. They were kept

down not only by the Egyptians, but by their own ignorance, and idolatry, and selfish division, and foul sins. They were spiritually dead—without a noble, pure, manful feeling left in them. Their history makes no secret of that. The Bible seems to take every care to let us see into what a miserable and brutal state they had fallen. Christ sent Moses to raise them out of that death; to take them through the Red Sea, as a sign that all that was washed away, to be forgiven of God and forgotten by them, and that from the moment they landed, a free people, on the farther shore, they were to consider all their old life past and a new one begun. So they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, as St. Paul says. And now all was to be new. They had been fancying that they belonged to the Egyptians. Now they had found out, and had it proved to them by signs and wonders which they could not mistake, that they belonged to the Lord. They had been brutal sinners. The Lord began to teach them that they were to rise above their own appetites and passions. They had been worshipping only what they could see and handle. The Lord began to teach them to worship Him—a person whom they could not see, though He was always near them, and watching over them. They had been living without independence, fellow-feeling, the sense of duty, or love of order. The Lord began to teach them to care for each other, to help each other, to know that they had a duty to perform towards each other, for which they were accountable to Him. They had owned no master except the Egyptians, whom they feared and obeyed unwillingly. The Lord began to teach them to obey Him loyally, from trust, and gratitude, and love. They had been willing to remain sinners, and brutes, and slaves,

provided they could get enough to eat and drink. The Lord began to teach them that His favour, His protection, were better than the flesh-pots of Egypt, and that He was able to feed them where it seemed impossible to men; to teach them that "man does not live by bread alone—cheap or dear, my friends—not by bread alone, but by *every* word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, does man live." That was the meaning of their being baptized in the cloud and in the sea. That was the meaning, and only a very small part of the meaning, of their Passover. Would you not think, my friends, that I had been speaking rather of our own Baptism, and of our own Supper of the Lord, to which you have been all called to-day, and that I had been telling you the meaning of them?

For when Jesus, the Lord, and King, and Head of mankind, died and rose again, He took away the sin of the world. He was the true Passover, the Lamb without spot, slain, as the scripture tells us, for the sins of the whole world. In the Jews' Passover, when the angel saw the lamb's blood on the door of the house, he passed by, and spared everyone in it. So now. The blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, is upon us; and for His sake, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But the Lord rose again this day. And when He, the Lord, the King, and Head of all men, rose, all men rose in Him. "As in Adam all die," says St. Paul, "even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Baptism is a sign of that to us, as the going through the Red Sea, and being baptized to Moses in it, was to the Jews. The passing of the Red Sea said to the Jews: "You have passed now out of your old

miserable state of slavery into freedom. The sins which you committed there are blotted out. You are taken into covenant with God. You are now God's people, and nothing can lose you this love and care, except your own sins, your own unfaithfulness to Him, your own wilful falling back into the slavish and brutal state from which He has delivered you."

And just so, baptism says to us: "Your sins are forgiven you. You are taken into covenant with God. You are God's people, God's family. You must forget and cast away the old Adam, the old slavish and savage pattern of man, which your Lord died to abolish, the guilt of which He bore for you on His cross; and you must rise to the new Adam, the new pattern of man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness, which the Lord showed forth in His life, and death, and rising again. For now God looks on you not as a guilty and condemned race of beings, but as a redeemed race, His children, for the sake of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. You have a right to believe that, as human beings, you are dead with Christ to the old Adam, the old sinful, brutal pattern of man. Baptism is the sign of it to you. Every child, let it or its parents be who they may, is freely baptized as a sign that all that old pattern of man is washed away, that they can and must have nothing to do with it henceforward, that it is dead and buried, and they must flee from it and forget it, as they would a corpse.

And the Lord's Supper also is a sign to us that, as human beings, we are risen with Christ, to a new life. A new life is our birthright. We have a right to live a new life. We have a duty to live a new life. We have a power, if we will, to live a new life; such a life as we never could live if we were left

to ourselves; a noble, just, godly, manful, Christlike, Godlike life, bred and nourished in us by the Spirit of Christ. That is our right; for we belong to Him who lived that life Himself, and bought us our share in it with His own death and resurrection. That is our duty; for if we share the Lord's blessings, it can only be in order that we may become like the Lord. Do you fancy that He died to leave us all no better than we are? His death would have had very little effect if that was all. No, says St. Paul; if you have a share in Christ, prove that you believe in your own share by becoming like Christ. You belong to His kingdom, and you must live as His subjects. He has bought for you a new and eternal life, and you must use that life. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above." . . . And what are they? Love, peace, gentleness, mercy, pity, truth, faithfulness, justice, patience, courage, order, industry, duty, obedience. . . . All, in short, which is like Jesus Christ. For these are heavenly things. These are above, where Christ sits at God's right hand. These are the likeness of God. That is God's character. Let it be your character likewise.

But again; if it is our right and our duty to be like that, it is also in our power. God would not have commanded us to be, what He had not given us the power to be. He would not have told us to seek those things which are above, if He had not intended us to find them. Wherefore it is written: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; for if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

This is the meaning of that text; namely, that God will give us the power of living this new and risen life,

which we are bound to live. This is one of the gifts for men, which the scripture tells us that Christ received when He rose from the dead, and ascended up on high. This is one of the powers of which He spoke, when after His resurrection He said, "That all power was given to Him in heaven and earth." The Lord's Supper is at once a sign of who will give us that gift, and a sign that He will indeed give it us. The Lord's Supper is the pledge and token to us that we all have a share in the likeness of Christ, the true pattern of man; and that if we come and claim our share, He will surely bestow it on us. He will renew, and change, and purify our hearts and characters in us, day by day, into the likeness of Himself. He who is the eternal life of men will nourish us, body, soul, and spirit, with that everlasting life of His, even as our bodies are nourished by that bread and wine. And if you ask me how? When you can tell me why a wheat grain cannot produce an oak, or an acorn a wheat plant; when you can tell me why our bodies are, each of them, the very same bodies which they were ten years ago, though every atom of flesh, and blood, and bone in them has been changed; when, in short, you, or any other living man, can tell me the meaning of those three words, body, life, and growth, then it will be time to ask that question. In the meantime let us believe that He who does such wonders in the life and growth of every blade of grass, can and will do far greater wonders for the life and growth of us, immortal beings, made in His own likeness, redeemed by His blood, and so believe, and thank, and obey, and wait till another and a nobler life to understand. And if we never understand at all—what matter, provided the thing be true?

XXXIV.

CHRISTMAS-DAY.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be on His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Father of an Everlasting age, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice henceforth even for ever.—ISAIAH ix. 6,7.

IN the time when the prophet Isaiah wrote this prophecy, everything round him was exactly opposite to his words. The king of Judæa, the prophet's country, was not reigning in righteousness. He was an unrighteous and wicked governor. The princes and great men were not ruling in judgment. They were unjust and covetous; they took bribes, and sold justice for money. They were oppressors, grinding down the poor, and defrauding those below them. So that the weak, and poor, and needy had no one to right them, no one to take their part. There was no man to feel for them, and defend them, and be a hiding-place and a covert for them from their cruel tyrants; no man to comfort and refresh them as rivers of water refresh a dry place, or the shadow of a great rock comforts the sunburnt traveller in the weary deserts.

Neither were these very poor oppressed people of the Jews in a right state of mind. They were ignorant and stupid, given to worship false gods. They had eyes, and yet could not use them to see that, as the

psalm told us this morning, the heavens declared the glory of God, and the firmament showed His handiwork. They were worshipping the sun, and moon, and stars, instead of the Lord God who made them. They were brutish too, and would not listen to teaching. They had ears, and yet would not hearken with them to God's prophets. They were rash, too, living from hand to mouth, discontented, and violent, as ignorant poor people will be in evil times. And they were stammerers —not with their tongue, but with their minds and thoughts. They were miserable; but they could not tell why. They were full of discontent and longings; but they could not put them into words. They did not know how to pray, how to open their hearts to God or to man. They knew of no one who could understand them and their sorrows; they could not understand them themselves, much less put them into words. They were altogether confused and stupefied; just in the same state, in a word, as the poor negro slaves in America, and the heathens, ay, and the Christians, too, are in, in all the countries of the world which do not know the good news of Christmas-day, or have forgotten it and disobeyed it.

But Isaiah had God's Spirit with him; the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, righteousness, justice. And that Holy Spirit convinced him of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, as He convinces every man who gives himself up humbly to God's teaching.

First, the Spirit convinced Isaiah of sin. He made him feel that the state of his country was wrong. And He made him feel why it was wrong; namely, because the men in it were wrong; because they were thinking wrong notions, feeling wrong feelings, doing wrong things; and that wrong was sin; and that sin was falling short of being what a man was made, and what every

man ought to be, namely, the likeness and glory of God; and that so his countrymen the Jews, one and all, had sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Next, He convinced Isaiah of righteousness. He made Isaiah feel and be sure that God was righteous; that God was no unjust Lord, like the wicked king of the Jews; that such evil doings as are going on were hateful to Him; that all that covetousness, oppression, taking of bribes, drunkenness, deceit, ignorance, stupid rashness and folly, of which the land was full, were hateful to God. He must hate them, for He was a righteous and a good God. They ought not to be there. For man, every man from the king on his throne to the poor labourer in the field, was meant to be righteous and good as God is. "But how will it be altered?" thought Isaiah to himself. "What hope for this poor miserable sinful world? People are meant to be righteous and good: but who will make them so? The king and his princes are meant to be righteous and good, but who will set them a pattern? When will there be a really good king, who will be an example to all in authority; who will teach men to do right, and compel and force them not to do wrong?"

And then the Holy Spirit of God answered that anxious question of Isaiah's, and convinced him of judgment.

Yes, he felt sure; he did not know why he felt so sure: but he did feel sure; God's Spirit in his heart made him feel sure, that in some way or other, some day or other, the Lord God would come to judgment, to judge the wicked princes and rulers of this world, and cast them out. It must be so. God was a righteous God. He would not endure these unrighteous doings for ever. He was not careless about this poor sinful world, and about all the sinful down-trodden ignorant

men, and women, and children in it. He would take the matter into His own hands. He would show that He was Lord and Master. If kings would not reign in righteousness, He would come and reign in righteousness Himself. He would appoint princes under Him, who would rule in judgment. And He would show men what true righteousness was; what the pattern of a true ruler was; namely, to be able to feel for the poor, and the afflicted, and the needy, to understand the wants, and sorrows, and doubts, and fears of the lowest and the meanest; in short, to be a man, a true, perfect man, with a man's heart, a man's pity, a man's fellow-feeling in Him. Yes. The Lord God would show Himself. He would set His righteous King to govern. And yet Isaiah did not know how, but he saw plainly that it must be so, that same righteous King, who was to set the world right, would be *a man*. It would be a man who was to be a hiding-place from the storm and a covert from the tempest. A man who would understand man, and teach men their duty.

Then the eyes of the blind would see, and the ears of those who heard should hearken; for they would hear a loving human voice, the voice of One who knew what was in man, who could tell them just what they wanted to know, and put His teaching into the shape in which it would sink most easily and deeply into their hearts. And then the hearts of the rash would understand knowledge; and the tongue of the stammerers would speak plainly. There will be no more confused cries from poor ignorant brutish oppressed people, like the cries of dumb beasts in pain; for He who was coming would give them words to utter their sorrows in. He would teach them how to speak to man and God. He would teach them how to pray, and when they prayed to say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

Then the vile person would be no more called bountiful, or the churl called liberal: flattery and cringing to the evil great would be at an end. The people would have sense to see the truth about right and wrong, and courage to speak it. Men would then be held for what they really were, and honoured and despised according to their true merits. Yes, said Isaiah, we shall be delivered from our wicked king and princes, from the heathen Assyrian armies, who fancy that they are going to sweep us out of our own land with fire and sword; from our own sins, and ignorance, and infidelity, and rashness. We shall be delivered from them all, for The righteous King is coming. Nay, He is here already, if we could but see. His goings-forth have been from everlasting. He is ruling us now —this wondrous Child, this Son of God. Unto us a Child is born already, unto us a Son is given already. But one day or other He will be revealed, and made manifest, and shown to men as a man; and then all the people shall know who He is; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Ah, my friends, Isaiah saw all this but dimly and afar off. He saw as through a glass darkly. He perhaps thought at times—indeed we can have little doubt that he thought—that the good young Prince Hezekiah, "The might of God," as his name means, who was growing up in his day to be a deliverer and a righteous king over the Jews, was to set the world right. No doubt he had Hezekiah in his mind when he said that a Child was born to the Jews, and a Son given to them; just as, of course, he meant his own son, who was born to him by the virgin prophetess, when he called his name Emmanuel, that is to say, God with us. But he felt that there was more in both things than

that. He felt that his young wife's conceiving and bearing a son, was a sign to him that some day or other a more blessed virgin would conceive and bear a mightier Son. And so he felt that whether or not Hezekiah delivered the Jews from their sin, and misery, and ignorance, God Himself would deliver them. He knew, by the Spirit of God, that his prophecy would come true, and remain true for ever. And so he died in faith, not having received the promises, God having prepared some better King for us, and having fulfilled the words of His prophet in a way of which, as far as we can see, he never dreamed.

Yes. Hezekiah failed to save the nation of the Jews. Instead of being the "father of an everlasting age," and having "no end of his family on the throne of David," his great-grandchildren and the whole nation of the Jews were swept away into captivity by the Babylonians, and no man of his house, as Jeremiah prophesied, has ever since prospered or sat on the throne of David. But still Isaiah's prophecy was true. True for us who are assembled here this day.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; even the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ the Lord. The government shall indeed be upon His shoulder; for it has been there always. For the Father has committed all things to the Son, that he may be King of kings and Lord of lords for ever. His name is indeed Wonderful; for what more wondrous thing was ever seen in heaven or in earth, than that great love with which He loved us? He is not merely called "The might of God," as Hezekiah was, for a sign and a prophecy; for He is the mighty God Himself. He is indeed the Counsellor; for He is the light who lighteth every man who comes into the world. He is "the Father of an everlasting age." There were hopes that

Hezekiah would be so; that he would raise the nation of the Jews again to a reform from which it would never fall away: but these hopes were disappointed; and the only one who fulfilled the prophecy is He who has founded His Church for ever on the rock of everlasting ages, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Hezekiah was to be the prince of peace for a few short years only. But the Child who is born to us, the Son who is given to us, is He who gave eternal peace to all who will accept it; peace which this world can neither give nor take away; and who will make that peace grow and spread over the whole earth, till men shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and the nations shall not learn war any more. Of the increase of His government and of His peace there shall be no end, till the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and the spirit of God be poured out on all flesh, to teach kings to reign in righteousness, after the pattern of the King of kings, the Babe of Bethlehem; to make the rich and powerful do justice, to teach the ignorant, to give the rich wisdom, to free the oppressed, to comfort the afflicted, to proclaim to all mankind the good news of Christmas Day, the good news that there was a man born into the world on this day who will be a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, like rivers of water in a dry place, like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; even the man Christ Jesus, who is able and willing to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, seeing that he has been tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin.

Yes, my friends, on that holy table stands the everlasting sign that Isaiah's prophecy has been fulfilled to the uttermost. That bread and that wine

declare to us, that to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given. They declare to us, in a word, that on this blessed day God was made man, and dwelt among men, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Oh, come to that table this day, and there claim your share in the most precious body and blood of the Divine Child of Bethlĕhem. Come and ask Him to pour out on you His Spirit, the Spirit which He poured on Hezekiah of old, "that he might fulfil his own name and live in the might of God." So will you live in the might of God. So you will be able to govern yourselves, and your own appetites, in righteousness and freedom, and rule your own households, or whatsoever God has set you to do, in judgment. So you will see things in their true light, as God sees them, and be ready and willing to hear good advice, and understand your way in this life, and be able to speak your hearts out in prayer to God, as to a loving and merciful Father. And in all your afflictions, let them be what they will, you will have a comfort, and a sure hope, and a well-spring of peace, and a hiding-place from the tempest, even The Man Christ Jesus, who said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither be ye afraid." The Man Christ Jesus, at whose birth the angels sang: "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

Now to Him who on this day was born of the blessed virgin, man of the substance of His mother, yet God the Son of God, be ascribed, with the Father and the Spirit, all power, glory, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever. Amen.

XXXV.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

(1853.)

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the Waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and peoples for thy life.—ISAIAH xliii. 1–4.

THE New Year has now begun; and I am bound to wish you all a happy New Year. But I am sent here to do more than that; to teach you how you may make your own New Year a happy one; or, if not altogether a happy one—for sorrows may and must come in their turn—yet still something better than a happy year, namely, a blessed year; a year on which you will be able to look back this day twelvemonths, and thank God for it; thank God for the tears which you have shed in it, as well as for the joy which you have felt; thank God for the dark days as well as for the light; thank God for what you have lost, as well as what you have found; and be able to say, "Well, this last year, if it has not been a happy year for me, at least it has been a blessed one for me. It has left me a stronger, soberer, wiser, godlier, better man than it found me."

How, then, can you make the New Year a blessed one for yourselves? I know but one way, my friends. The ancient way. The Bible way. The way by which Abraham, and Jacob, and David, and all the holy men of old, and all the saints, and martyrs, and righteous and godly among men, made their lives blessed among themselves, in spite of sorrow, and misfortune, and distress, and persecution, and torture, and death itself; the one only old way of being blessed, which was from the beginning, and will last for ever and ever, through all worlds and eternities; the way of the old saints, which St. Paul sets forth in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews; and that is, *faith*. Faith, which is the substance of what we hope for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith, of which it is written, that the just shall live by his faith.

But how can faith give you a blessed New Year? In the same way in which it gave the old saints blessed years all their lives through, and is giving them a blessed eternity now and for ever before the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, to which may God in His mercy bring us all likewise.

They trusted in God. They had faith, not in themselves, like too many; not in their own good works, like too many; not in their own faith, in their own frames, and feelings, and assurances, like too many; but they had faith in God. It was faith in God which made one of them, the great prophet Isaiah, write the glorious words which I have chosen for my text this day, to show his countrymen the Jews, even while they were in the very lowest depths of shame, and poverty, and misfortune, that God had not forgotten them; that for those who trusted in Him, a blessed time was surely coming.

And it was faith in God, too, which put it into the

minds of the good men who choose these Sunday lessons out of the Bible, to appoint such chapters as these to be read year by year, at the coming in of the new year, for ever. Faith in God, I say, put that into their minds. For those good men trusted in God, that He would not change; that hundreds and thousands of years would make no difference in His love; that the promises made by His Holy Spirit to Isaiah the prophet would stand true for ever and ever. And they trusted in God, too, that what He had spoken by the mouth of His holy apostles was true; that after the blessed Lord came down on earth, there was to be no difference between Jews and Gentiles; that the great and precious promises made by God to the Jews were made also to all the nations of the earth; that all things written in the Old Testament, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Malachi, were written not for the Jews only, but for English, French, Italians, Germans, Russians—for all the nations of the world; that we English were God's people now, just as much, ay, far more, than the old Jews were, and that, therefore, the Old Testament promises, as well as the New Testament ones, were part of our inheritance as members of Christ's Church. And therefore they appointed Old Testament lessons to be read in church, to show us English what our privileges were, what God's covenant and promise to us were. We, as much as the Jews, are called by the name of the Lord who created us. Were we not baptised into His name at that font? Has He not loved us? Has He not heaped us English, for hundreds of years past, with blessings such as He never bestowed on any nation? Has He not given men for us, and nations for our life? While all the nations of the world have been at war, slaying and being slain, has He not kept this fair land of

England free and safe from foreign invaders for more than eight hundred years? Since the world was made, perhaps, such a thing was never heard of, such a mercy shown to any nation; that a great and rich country like this should be preserved for eight hundred years from invasion of foreign armies, and all the horrors and miseries of war, which have swept, from time to time, every other nation in the world with the besom of desolation.

Ay, and but sixty years ago, in the time of the French war, when almost every other nation in Europe was made desolate with fire, and sword, and war, did not God preserve this land of England, as He never preserved country before, from all the miseries which were sweeping over other nations? Oh, strange and wonderful mercy of God, that at the very time that the gospel was dying out all over Europe, it was being lighted again in England; and that while the knowledge of God was failing elsewhere, it was increasing here! Oh, strange and wonderful mercy of God, who has given to us English, now for one hundred and sixty years and more, those very equal laws, and freedom, and rights of conscience, for which so many other nations of Europe are still crying and struggling in vain, amid slavery, and oppression, and injustice, and heavy burdens, such as we here in England should not endure a week! Oh, strange and wonderful mercy of God, who but three years ago, when all the other nations of Europe were shaken with wars, and riots, and seditions, every man's hand against his neighbour, kept this land of England in perfect peace and quiet by those just laws and government, proving to us the truth of His own promises, that those who seek peace by righteous dealings, shall find it, and that, as Isaiah says, the fruit of justice is quietness and assurance for

ever! And last, but not least, my friends, is it not a sign, a sign not to be mistaken, of God's good-will and mercy to us, that now, at this very time of all others, when almost every country in Europe is going to wrack and ruin through the folly and wickedness of their kings and rulers, He should have given us here in England a Queen who is a pattern of goodness and purity, in ruling not only the nation, but her own household, to every wife and mother, from the highest to the lowest; and a Prince whose whole heart seems set on doing good, and on helping the poor, and improving the condition of the labourers? My friends, I say that we are unthankful and unfaithful. We do not thank God a hundredth part enough for the blessings which He has given us. We do not trust Him a hundredth part enough for the blessings which He has in store for us. If some of us here could but see and feel for a single month how people are off abroad; if they could change places with a French, an Italian, a Russian labourer, it would teach them a lesson about God's goodness to England which they would not soon forget. May God grant that we may never have to learn that lesson in that way! God grant that we may never, to cure us of our unthankfulness and want of faith, and godless and unmanly grumbling and complaining, be brought, for a single week, into the same state as some hundred millions of our fellow-creatures are in foreign parts! Oh, my friends, let us thank God for the mercies of the past year! Most truly He has fulfilled to England his promise given by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One, thy Saviour. Thou hast been precious in my sight,

and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and peoples for thy life."

Away, then, with discontent and anxiety for the coming year. Or rather, let us be only discontented with ourselves. Let us only be anxious about our own conduct. God cannot change. If anything goes wrong, it will be not because He has left us, but because we have left Him. Is it not written that all things work together for good to those who love God? Then if things do not work together for good in this coming year, it will be because we do not love God. Do not let us say, "I am righteous, but my neighbours are wicked, and therefore I must be miserable;" neither let us lay the blame of our misfortunes on our rulers; let us lay it on ourselves.

What was the word of the Lord to the Jews in a like case: "What means this proverb which you take up, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? It is not so, O house of Israel. The son shall not die for the iniquity of his father, nor the father for the iniquity of the son. The soul that sinneth, it shall die, saith the Lord."

Oh, my friends, take this to heart solemnly, in the year to come. Our troubles, more of them at least than we fancy, are our own fault, and not our neighbours', or the government's, or anyone's else. And those which are not our own fault directly are so in this way, that they are sent as sharp and wholesome lessons to us; and if we were what we ought to be, we should not want those lessons. Do not fancy that that is a sad and doleful thought to begin the new year with. God forbid! It would be doleful and sad indeed if any one of us, in spite of all his right-doing, might be plunged into any hopeless misery, through

the fault of other people, over whom he has no control. But thanks be to the Lord, it is not so. We are His children, and He cares for each and every one of us separately. Each and every one of us has to answer for himself alone, face to face with his God, day by day; every man must bear his own burden; and to every one of us who love God, all things will work together for good. It is, and was, and always will be, as Abraham well knew, far from God to punish the righteous with the wicked. The Judge of all the earth will do right. None of us who repents and turns from the sins he sees round him and in him; none of us who prays for the light and guiding of God's Spirit; none of us who struggles day by day to keep himself unspotted from this evil world, and live as God's son, without scandal or ill-name in the midst of a sinful and perverse generation; none of us who does that, but God's blessing will rest on him. What ruins others will only teach and strengthen him; what brings others to shame, will only bring him to honour, and make his righteousness plain to be seen by all, that God may be glorified in His people. Let the coming year be what it may; to the holy, the humble, the upright, the godly, it will be a blessed year, fulfilling the blessed promises of the Lord, that those who trust in Him shall never be confounded.

Oh, my friends, consider but this one thing, that the Almighty God, who made all heaven and earth, has bid us trust in Him. And when He bids us, is it not a sin, an insult to Him, not to trust Him—not to believe His words to us? "Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good; dwell in the land," working where He has set thee, "and verily thou shalt be fed." "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. A thousand shall fall

by thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord thy refuge, no plague shall come nigh thy dwelling. Thou shalt call upon me, I will answer thee. Because thou hast set thy love on me, I will deliver thee; with long life will I satisfy thee, and show thee my salvation."

My friends, these words are in the book of Psalms. Either they are the most cruel words that ever were spoken on earth to tempt poor wretches into vain security and fearful disappointment, or they are—what are they?—the sure and everlasting promise of our Father in heaven to us His children. We have only to ask for them, and we shall receive them; to claim them, and they will be fulfilled to us. "For He who spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him for us, will He not with Him likewise freely give us all things," and make, by His fatherly care, and providence, and education, all our new years blessed new years, whether or not they are happy ones?

XXXVI.

THE DELUGE.

My spirit shall not always strive with man.—GENESIS vi. 3.

LAST Sunday we read in the first lesson of the fall. This Sunday we read of the flood, the first-fruits of the fall.

It is an awful and a fearful story. And yet, if we will look at it by faith in God, it is a most cheerful and hopeful story—a gospel—a good news of salvation—like every other word in the Bible, from beginning to end. Ay, and to my mind, the most hopeful words of all in it, are the very ones which at first sight look most terrible, the words with which my text begins: "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

For is it not good news—the good news of all news—the news which every poor soul who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness, longs to hear; and when they hear it, feel it to be the good news—the only news which can give comfort to fallen and sorrowful men, tied and bound with the chain of their sins, that God's Spirit does strive at all with man? That God is looking after men? That God is yearning over sinners, as the heart of a father yearns over his rebellious child, as the heart of a faithful and loving husband yearns after an unfaithful wife? That God does not take a disgust at us for all our unworthiness, but wills that

none should perish, but that all should come to repentance? Oh joyful news! Man may be, as the text says that he was in the time of Noah, so low fallen that he is but flesh like the brutes that perish; the imaginations of his heart may be only evil continually; his spirit may be dead within him, given up to all low and fleshly appetites and passions, anger, and greediness, and filth; and yet the pure and holy Spirit of God condescends to strive and struggle with him, to convince him of sin, and make him discontented and ashamed at his own brutishness, and shake and terrify his soul with the wholesome thought: "I am a sinner—I am wrong—I am living such a life as God never meant me to live—I am not what I ought to be—I have fallen short of what God intended me to be. Surely some evil will come to me from this." Then the Holy Spirit convinces man of righteousness. He shows man that what he has fallen short of is the glory of God; that man was meant to be, as St. Pauls says, the likeness and glory of God; to show forth God's glory, and beauty, and righteousness, and love in his own daily life; as a looking-glass, though it is not the sun, still gives an image and likeness of the sun, when the sun shines on it, and shows forth the glory of the sunbeams which are reflected on it.

And then, the Holy Spirit convinces man of judgment. He shows man that God cannot suffer men, or angels, or any other rational spirits and immortal souls, to be unlike Himself; that because He is the only and perfect good, whatsoever is unlike Him must be bad; because He is the only and perfect love, who wills blessings and good to all, whatsoever is unlike Him must be unloving, hating, and hateful—a curse and evil to all around it; because He is the only perfect Maker and Preserver, whatsoever is unlike Him must

be in its very nature hurtful, destroying, deadly—a disease which injures this good world, and which He will therefore cut out, burn up, destroy in some way or other, if it will not submit to be cured. For this, my friends, is the meaning of God's judgments on sinners; this is why He sent a flood to drown the world of the ungodly; this is why He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; this is why He swept away the nations of Canaan; this is why He destroyed Jerusalem, His own beloved city, and scattered the Jews over the face of the whole earth unto this day; this is why He destroyed heathen Rome of old, and why He has destroyed, from time to time, in every age and country, great nations and mighty cities by earthquake, and famine, and pestilence, and the sword; because He knows that sin is ruin and misery to all; that it is a disease which spreads by infection among fallen men; and that He must cut off the corrupt nation for the sake of preserving mankind, as the surgeon cuts off a diseased limb, that his patient's whole body may not die. But the surgeon will not cut off the limb as long as there is a chance of saving it: he will not cut it off till it is mortified and dead, and certain to infect the whole body with the same death, or till it is so inflamed that it will inflame the whole body also, and burn up the patient's life with fever. Till then he tends it in hope; tries by all means to cure it. And so does the Lord, the Lord Jesus, the great Physician, whom His Father has appointed to heal and cure this poor fallen world. As long as there is hope of curing any man, any nation, any generation of men, so long will his Spirit strive lovingly and hopefully with man. For see the blessed words of the text: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man. This must end. This must end at some time or other. This battle between my Spirit

and the wicked and perverse wills of these sinners; this battle between the love and the justice and the purity which I am trying to teach them, and the corruption and the violence with which they are filling the earth." But there is no passion in the Lord, no spite, no sudden rage, like the brute passionate anger of weak man. Our anger, if we are not under the guiding of God's Spirit, conquers our wills, carries us away, makes us say and do on the moment—God forgive us for it—whatsoever our passion prompts us. The Lord's anger does not conquer Him. It does not conquer His patience, His love, His steadfast will for the good of all. Even when it shows itself in the flood and the earthquake; even though it break up the fountains of the great deep, and destroy from off the earth both man and beast, yet it is, and was, and ever will be, the anger of The Lamb—a patient, a merciful, and a loving anger.

Therefore the Lord says: "Yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." One hundred and twenty years more he would endure those corrupt and violent sinners, in the hope of correcting them. One hundred and twenty years more would God's Spirit strive with men. One hundred and twenty years more the long-suffering of God, as St. Peter says, would wait, if by any means they would turn and repent. Oh, wonderful love and condescension of God! God waits for man! The Holy One waits for the unholy! The Creator waits for the work of His own hands! The wrathful God, who repents that He has made man upon the earth, waits one hundred and twenty years for the very creatures whom He repents having made! Does this seem strange to us—unlike our notions of God? If it is strange to us, my friends, its being strange is only a proof of how far we have fallen from the likeness of

God, wherein man was originally created. If we were more like God, then the accounts of God's long-suffering, and mercy, and repentance, which we read in the Bible, would not be so strange to us. We should understand what God declares of Himself, by seeing the same feelings working in ourselves, which He declares to be working in Himself. And if we were more righteous and more loving, we should understand more how God's will was a loving and a righteous will; how His justice was His mercy, and His mercy His justice, instead of dividing His substance, who is one God, by fancying that His mercy and His justice are two different attributes, which are at times contrary the one to the other.

We read nothing here about God's absolute purposes, and fixed decrees, whereof men talk so often, making a god in their own fallen image, after their own fallen likeness. The Lord, the Word of God, of whom the Bible tells us, does not think it beneath his dignity to say: "It repenteth me that I have made man." Different, truly, from that false god which man makes in his own image. Man is proud, and he fancies that God is proud; man is self-willed and selfish, and he fancies that God is self-willed and selfish; man is arbitrary and obstinate, and determined to have his own way just because it is his own way; and then he fancies that God is arbitrary and obstinate, and determines to have His own way and will, just because it is His own way and will. But wilt thou know, oh vain man, why God will have His own way and will? Because His way is a good way, and His will a loving will; because the Lord knows that His way is the only path of life, and joy, and blessing to man and beast, yes, and to the very hairs of our head, which are all numbered, and to the sparrows, whereof not one falls to the ground with-

out our Father's knowledge; because His will is a loving will, which wills that none should perish, but that all should come and be saved in body, soul, and spirit. He will have His own will done, not because it is His own will, but because it is good, good for men. And if men will change and repent, then will He change and repent also. If man will resist the striving of God's Spirit with him, then will the Lord say: "It repenteth me that I have made that man." But if a man will repent him of the evil, then God will repent Him of the evil also. If a man will let God's Spirit convince him, and will open his ears and hear, and open his eyes and see, and open his heart to take in the loving thoughts and the right thoughts, and the penitent and humble thoughts, which do come to him—you know they do come to you all at times—then the Lord will repent also, as he repents, and repent concerning the evil which He has declared concerning that man. So said the Lord, who cannot change, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the same now that He was in the days of the flood, to Jeremiah the prophet, when He moved him to go down to the potter's house, and watch him there at his work.

And the potter made a vessel—something which would be useful and good for a certain purpose—but the clay was marred in the hand of the potter. He was good and skilful; but there was a fault in the clay. What did he do? Throw the clay away as useless? No. He made it again another vessel. He was determined to make, not anything, but something useful and good. And if the clay, being faulty, failed him once, he would try again. He would change his purpose and plan, but not his right will to make good and useful vessels; them he *would* make, if not by one way, then by another. And Jeremiah watched him; and as he

watched, the Spirit of the Lord came on him, and taught him that that poor potter's way of working with his clay, was a pattern and likeness of the Lord's work on earth. Oh shame, that this great parable should have been twisted by men to make out that God is an arbitrary tyrant, who works by a brute necessity! It taught Jeremiah the very opposite. It taught him what it ought to teach us, that God does change, because man changes, that God's steadfast will is the good of men, and therefore because men change their weak self-willed course, and fall, and seek out many inventions, therefore God changes to follow them, like a good shepherd, tracking and following the lost and wandering sheep up and down, right and left, over hill and dale, if by any means He may find him, and bring him home on His shoulders to the fold, calling upon the angels of God: "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which I had lost."

This is the likeness of God. The good and loving will of a Father following his wandering children. The likeness of a loving Father repenting that He hath brought into the world sinful children, to be a misery to themselves and all around them, and yet for the same reason loving those children, striving with their wicked wills to the very last, giving them one last chance and time for repentance; as the Lord did to those evil men of the old world, sending to them Noah, a preacher of righteousness, if by any means they would turn from their sins and be saved. Ay, not only preaching to their ears by Noah, but to their hearts by His Spirit; as St. Peter tells us, He Himself, Christ the Lord, went Himself by His Spirit to those very sinners before the flood, and strove to bring them to their reason again. By His Spirit; by the very same one and only Holy Spirit of God, St. Peter says, by

which Christ Himself was raised from the dead, did He try to raise the souls of those sinners before the flood, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness: but they would not. They were disobedient. Their wills resisted His will to the last; and then the flood came, and swept them all away.

And so the first work of the heavenly Workman was marred in the making by no fault of His, but by the fault of what He made. He made men persons, rational beings with wills, that they might be willingly like Him: but they used those wills to be unlike Him, to rebel against Him, and to fill the earth with violence and corruption. And so, for the good of all mankind to come, He had to sweep them all away. But of that same sinful clay He made another vessel, as it seemed good to Him; even Noah and his sons, whom He saved that He might carry on the race of the sons of God unto this day.

And after that again, my friends, in a day more dark and evil still, when the earth was again corrupt before God, and filled with violence; when all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth, so that, as St. Paul said of them, there was none that did good, no not one: then the same Lord, when He saw that all the world lay in wickedness, and that the clay of human-kind was marred in the hands of the potter, then did He cast away that clay as reprobate and useless, and destroy mankind off the face of the earth? Not so. Then, when there was none to help, His own arm brought salvation, and His own righteousness sustained Him; He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. His own righteousness sustained Him. His perfectly good and righteous will never failed Him for a moment; man He would save, and man He saved. If none else could

do it, He would do it Himself. He would bring salvation with His own arm. He would fulfil His Father's will, which is that none should perish; He would be made flesh, and dwell among men, that man might behold the likeness of God the Father, full of grace and truth, and see what they were meant to be. Then, in Him, in Jesus who wept over Jerusalem, was fully revealed and shown the likeness and glory of the Lord; the Lord in whose image man was made; who walked and spoke with Adam in the garden; who was not ashamed to say that it repented Him that He had made man; whom Ezekiel saw upon His throne, and as it were upon the throne the appearance of the likeness of a man; whom Daniel saw, and knew him to be the Son of Man. Not a man, then, of flesh and blood; but the Eternal Word of God, in whose image man was made, who could be loving and merciful, long-suffering and repenting Him of the evil, but never of the good. He came, and He swept away, as He had told the Apostles that He would do, by such afflictions as man had never seen since the beginning of the world until then, that Roman world with all its devilish systems and maxims, whereby the nations were kept down in slavery and sin; and He founded a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwell righteousness, even this Holy Catholic Church, to which we all belong this day.

Yes, my friends, this is our gospel, our good news, that there is a God whose Spirit strives with sinners to change them into His own likeness. A God who is no dark, obstinate, inexorable Fate, whose arbitrary decrees must come to pass; but a loving and merciful God, long-suffering, and who repenteth Him of the evil; who repents Him of the evil which is in man, and hates it, and has sworn to Himself to fight against it, till He has put all enemies under His feet, and cast

out of His kingdom all things which offend. Who repents Him of the evil in man: but who will never again repent Him of having made man, for then He would repent of having become man; He would repent of having been conceived of the Holy Ghost; He would repent of having been born of the Virgin Mary; He would repent of having been crucified, dead, and buried; He would repent of having risen from the dead, and ascended up into heaven in His man's body, and soul, and spirit; He would repent of sitting on the right hand of God; He would repent of coming to judge the quick and the dead; He would repent of having done His Father's will on earth, even as He did it from all eternity in the bosom of the Father. For He is a man; and even as the reasonable soul and body are one man, so God and man are one Christ. As man, He did His Father's will in Judæa of old; as man, He will judge the world; as man He rules it now; as man, St. John saw Him fifty years after He ascended to heaven, and His eyes were like a flame of fire, and His hair like fine wool, and He was girt under the bosom with a golden girdle, and His voice was like the sound of many waters; as man, He said: "Fear not: I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and hell." Yes. This is the gospel, the good news for fallen man, that there is a Man in the midst of the throne of God, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth; that the fate of the world, and all that is therein—the fate of suns and stars—the fate of kings and nations—the fate of every publican and harlot, and heathen and outcast—the fate of all who are in death and hell, depends alike upon the sacred heart of Jesus; the heart which groaned at the tomb of

Lazarus His friend; the heart which wept over Jerusalem; the heart which said to the blessed Magdalene, the woman who was a sinner: "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee;" the heart which now yearns after every sinful and wandering soul in His church, and all over the earth of God, crying to you all: "Why will ye die? Have I any pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord, and not rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live? Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, my friends, wonderful as my words are—as wonderful to me who speak them as they can be to you who hear them—yet they are true. True; for on that table stand the bread and wine whereof He Himself said, standing upon this very earth which He Himself had made: "This is my body which is given for you; this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which I will give for the life of the world."

XXXVII.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The kingdom of God is within you.—LUKE xvii. 21.

THESE words are in the second lesson for this morning's service. Let us think a little about them.

What they mean must depend on what the kingdom of God means; for that is the one thing about which they speak.

Now, the kingdom of God is very often spoken of in the New Testament. Indeed, it is the thing it speaks of above all others. It was the thing which our Lord went about preaching. It was the thing of which He spoke in His parables, likening the kingdom of God first to one thing, then to another, that He might make men understand what it was like.

Now, it is worth remarking that we—I mean even religious people—speak very little about the kingdom of God nowadays. One hears less about it than about any other words, almost, which stand in the New Testament. Both in sermons and in religious books, and in the talk of godly people, one hears the kingdom of God spoken of very seldom. One hears words about the Church, which are very good and true; but very little, if anything, about the kingdom of God, though both St. Paul, and St. John, and the blessed Lord Himself, speak of the two together, as if

they could not be parted; as if one could not think of the one without thinking of the other. And we hear words about the gospel, too, some of them very good and true, and others, I am sorry to say, very bad and false: but, true or false, they are not often joined now in men's minds, or mouths, or books, with the kingdom of God. But the New Testament joins them almost always. It says that gospel must be good news. Therefore the gospel must be good news about something. But about what? We hear all manner of answers nowadays; but we hear the right one very seldom. People talk of the gospel as if it only meant the good news that one man can be saved here, and another man can be saved there. And that is good news, certainly. It is good and blessed news to hear that any one poor sinner can be saved from sin, and from the wages of sin. But the holy scriptures, when they talk of the gospel, call it the gospel of the kingdom of God. And I think it best and wisest to call it oftenest, what the holy scripture calls it oftenest, and to try and understand, first of all, what that means, what the good news of the kingdom of God is: and to understand that, we must first understand what the kingdom of God is.

But some may answer, holy scripture speaks of the gospel of salvation. True, it does, once or twice. But what does that show? Is that a different gospel from the gospel of the kingdom of God? Are there two gospels? Surely not. Else why would holy scripture speak so often of "the gospel"—"the good news," by itself, without any word after to show what it was about? It says often simply "the gospel;" because there is but one gospel; and, as St. Paul says, if any man or angel preach any other than that one, "Let him be anathema."

Therefore the gospel of salvation must be the same as the gospel of the kingdom of God; and, therefore, it seems to me, that salvation and the kingdom of God must be one and the same thing.

Now, do you think so? When I say "The kingdom of God is salvation," do you think it is? Have you even any clear notion of what I mean when I say it? Some of you have not, I am afraid; you cannot see at first sight what salvation and the kingdom of God have to do with each other. And why? You think salvation means being saved from hell, and going to heaven, when you die. And so it does: but I trust in God and in God's holy scripture, that it means a great deal more; for I think it means being unfit for hell, and fit for heaven, before we die. At least, so says the Church Catechism, which teaches every little child to thank his Heavenly Father for having brought him into such a state of salvation in this life, even while he is young. Thanks be to The Spirit of God which taught our forefathers to put these precious words into the Church Catechism, to guard us against falling into the very same mistake as the Pharisees of old fell into, when they asked our Lord when the kingdom of God was to come. And, believe me, it is easy enough and common enough to fall into the same mistake.

For what was their mistake? They fancied that the kingdom of God was not yet come. And do not most of you think the same? They did not deny, of course, that God was almighty, and could rule and govern all mankind if He chose so to do. But they did not believe that He was ruling and governing all mankind then, because they did not know what His rule and government were like. Now, St. Paul tells us what God's kingdom is like. The kingdom of God, he says, is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy

Spirit. So wherever there is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, there the kingdom of God is. But His kingdom over what? Over dumb animals, or over men? Over men, certainly; for dumb animals cannot have righteousness, or joy in the Holy Spirit. But over what part of a man? Over his body or over his spirit, as we call it nowadays? Over his spirit, certainly; for it is only our spirits which can be righteous, or peaceful, or joyful in God's Spirit. Therefore God's kingdom, of which St. Paul speaks, is a kingdom, a government over the souls, the spirits of men. Now, are our spirits the inward part of us, or our bodies? Our spirits, certainly. We all say, and say rightly, that our bodies are the outward part of us, and that our spirits are within us. Now, do you not see how that agrees exactly with the blessed Lord's saying in the text, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you"—that is, in your spirits, because it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; and these are things which only our souls, not our bodies at all, can have.

But these Pharisees were not righteous; they were wicked and hypocritical men. Was the kingdom of God within them? The blessed Lord said plainly that it was. He said not, "The kingdom of God is within some people's hearts;" or, "The kingdom of God is within the hearts of believers;" or, "The kingdom of God might be within you if you liked." But He said that the kingdom of God was then and there within the hearts of those wicked and unbelieving Pharisees.

Now, how could that be? In the same way that some time before that, as St. Luke tells us, the power of the Lord was present to heal those same Pharisees; and they were for the time amazed, and glorified God, and were filled with fear at His mighty works; but

not healed. Their souls were not cured of their sin and folly by any means; for we find in the very next chapter, that because Jesus cured a palsied man on the Sabbath-day they were filled with madness, and consulted together how to kill Him.

For, my friends, as it was with them, so it is with us. God's kingdom is within every one of us; but it may make us worse, as well as make us better. It may fill us with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; or it may fill us, as it filled the Pharisees, with madness, and hatred of religion and of goodness; as it is written, that the gospel may be a savour of death unto death to us, as well as a savour of life unto life. And it depends on us which it shall be.

This is what I mean: God's kingdom is within each of us. God is the King of our hearts and souls; our baptism tells us so; and it tells us truly. And because God is the King of each of our hearts, He comes everlastingly to take possession of our hearts, and continues claiming our souls for His own. He speaks in our hearts day and night; whenever we have a good thought, He speaks in our hearts, and says to us: "I am the King of your spirit. It must obey me. I put this good thought into your hearts, and you are bound to follow that good thought, because it is a law of my kingdom." Or again, God speaks in our hearts, and says to us: "You have done this wrong thing. You know that it is wrong. You know that it is an offence against my law. Why have you rebelled against me?" Or again, when we see anyone do a good, a loving, or a noble action; or when we read of the lives of good and noble men and women; above all, when we read or hear of the character and doings of the blessed Lord Jesus, then and there God speaks in our hearts, and stirs us up to love and admire these noble and blessed examples, and

says to us: "That is right. That is beautiful. That is what men should do. That is what you should do. Why are you not like that man? Why are you not like my saints? Why are you not like me, the Lord Jesus Christ?"

You all surely know what I mean. You know that I do not mean that you hear a voice speaking to your ears, but that thoughts and feelings come into your heart, without you putting them there: ay, often enough, in spite of your trying to drive them away. Now, those right thoughts are the kingdom of God within you. They are the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ speaking by His Holy Spirit to your spirit, and telling you that He is your King, and that you ought to obey Him; and that obeying Him means being righteous and good, as He is righteous and good; and calling on you to give up your own wills and fancies, and to do His will, and let Him make you holy, even as He is holy. That, I say, is the kingdom of God showing itself within you, telling you that God is your King, and telling you how to obey Him.

But what if a man will not hear that voice? What if a man rebels proudly against the good thoughts that rise in his mind, and tries to forget them, and grows angry with them, angry with the preacher, the Church Service, the Bible itself, because they *will* go on reminding him of what he knows in his heart to be right? What if those good thoughts only make him the more stubborn and determined to do his own pleasure, and follow his own interests, and do his own will?

Do you not see that to that man God's kingdom over his heart is a savour of death unto death—that his finding out that God is his Lord only makes him more rebellious—that God's Spirit striving with his heart to bring it right, only stirs up his stubbornness

and self-will, and makes him go the more obstinately wrong?

Oh, my friends, this is a fearful thought! That man can become worse by God's loving desire to make him better! But so it is. So it was with Pharaoh of old. All God's pleading with him by the message of Moses and Aaron, by the mighty plagues which God sent on Egypt, only hardened Pharaoh's heart. The Lord God spoke to him, and his message only lashed Pharaoh's proud and wicked will into greater fury and rebellion, as a vicious horse becomes the more unmanageable the more you punish it. Therefore, it is said plainly in scripture, that *The Lord* hardened Pharaoh's heart; not as some fancy, that the Lord's will was to make Pharaoh hard-hearted and wicked. God forbid. The Lord is the fountain of good only, and not He, but we and the devil, make evil. But the more the Lord pleaded with Pharaoh, and tried to bend his will, the more self-willed he became. The more the Lord showed Pharaoh that the Lord was King, the more he hated the kingdom and will of God, the more he determined to be king himself, and to obey no law but his own wicked fancies and pleasures, and asked: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?"

And so it was with the Pharisees. When they found out that the kingdom of God was within them, that God was the King of their hearts and minds, and was trying to change their feelings and alter their opinions, it only maddened them. They were determined not to change. They were determined not to confess that they had been wrong, and had mistaken the meaning of holy scripture. They were too proud to confess what Jesus told them, that they were no better than the poor ignorant common people whom they despised. And yet they knew in

their hearts that He was right. When the Lord told them the parable of the vineyard, they answered, "God forbid!" they felt at once that the parable had to do with them—that they were the wicked husbandmen on whom He said their master would take vengeance: but that only maddened them the more, till they ended by crucifying the Lord of Glory, upon a pretence which they knew was a false and lying one; and when Judas Iscariot said, "I have betrayed the innocent blood," they did not deny that the Lord Jesus was innocent; all they answered was, "What is that to us?" They were determined to have their own way whether He was innocent or not. They had seen God's likeness. They had seen what God was like, by seeing the conduct of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. And when they saw God's likeness they hated it, because it was not like themselves. And the more God strove with their hearts, and tried to make them obey Him, the more, in short, they felt His kingdom within them, the more they hated that kingdom of God within them, because it reproved them, and convinced them of sin. Oh, my friends, young people especially, beware; beware lest you fall into the same miserable state of mind. The kingdom of God is within you. The Holy Spirit, by which you were regenerate in holy baptism, is stirring and pleading with your hearts, making you happy when you do right, unhappy when you do wrong. Oh, listen to those good thoughts and feelings within you! Never fancy that they are your own thoughts and feelings: else you will fancy that you can put them away and take them back again when you choose to change and become religious. Do not let the devil deceive you into that notion. These good thoughts and feelings are the Spirit of God. They are the signs that the kingdom of God is within you; that

God is King and Master of your hearts and minds; and that you cannot keep Him out of them: but that He can enter into them when He likes, and put right thoughts into them. But though you cannot prevent God and His kingdom entering into you, you can refuse to enter into it. Alas! alas! how many of you shut your ears to God's voice: try to drive God's Spirit out of your own hearts; try to forget what is right, because it is unpleasant to remember it, and say to yourselves, "I will have my own way. I will try and forget what the clergyman said in his sermon, or what I learnt at school. I am grown up now, and I will do what I like." Oh, my friends, is it a wise or a hopeful battle to fight against the living God? Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption, lest He go away from you and leave you to yourselves, spiritually dead, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, whose end is to be burned. Grieve Him not, lest He depart, and with Him both the Father and the Son. And then you will not know right from wrong, because God the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of right, has left you. You will not know what a man ought to be or do, because the Son of Man, the perfect likeness of God, and therefore the pattern of man, has left you. You will not know that God the Father is your Father, but only fancy him a stern taskmaster, reaping where He has not sown, and requiring of you more than you are bound to pay, because God the Father has left you.

You may, indeed, keep out ugly thoughts for a time. You may go on wantonly in sin, and worldliness, and self-will. And then, by way of falling deeper still, you may take up with some false sort of religion, which makes people fancy that they know God, and are one of His elect, while in works they deny Him, and their sinful heart is unchanged.

Then your mouth indeed may be full of second-hand talk about the gospel. But what gospel? I call that a devil's gospel, and not God's gospel, which makes men fancy that they may continue in sin that grace may abound. I call any grace which leaves men in their sins the devil's grace, and not God's grace. Certainly it is not the gospel of the kingdom of God; for if it was, it would produce in men the fruits of that kingdom, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, instead of the fruits which we see too often, bigotry and self-conceit, bitterness, evil-speaking, and hard judgments, and joy in a most unholy and damnable spirit, not to mention covetousness and deceitfulness, or even in some cases wantonness and lust. And yet such men will often fancy that they belong especially to God, and doubt whether He will have mercy on any who do not exactly agree with them; while in reality God and His kingdom have utterly left their hearts, and they are as blind and dark as the beasts which perish. May God preserve us from that second death which comes on sinners, when, after a sinful youth, their terrified souls begin to cry out in fear at the sight of their sins; and they, instead of casting away their sins, keep their sins, or change old sins for more respectable and safe new ones, and drug their souls with false doctrines, as foolish nurses quiet children's crying by giving them poisonous medicines. I know men who have fallen, I really fear at times, into that state of mind, and are like those Pharisees of whom our Lord said: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Even for them it is not too late: but, let them recollect, if the kingdom of God is within them, if they have any feelings of right and wrong left in them, that their covetousness, and lying,

and slandering, and conceit, is fighting against God; that these are just what God desires to cast out of them; and that unless they give up their hearts to God, and let Him cast out their sins, and be converted, and become like little children, gentle, humble, teachable, friendly, and kind-hearted, obedient to their heavenly Father, God will cast them out of His kingdom among the things which offend, and bring a bad name on religion; among those very profligate and open sinners whom they are so ready to despise and curse.

XXXVIII.

THE LIGHT.

But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.—EPHESIANS v. 13, 14.

ST. PAUL has been telling the Ephesians who they are; that they are God's dear children. To whom they belong; to Christ who has given Himself for them. What they ought to do; to follow God's likeness, and live in love. That they are light in the Lord; and are to walk as children of the light; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. As much as to say: Do not believe those who tell you that there is no harm in young people going wrong together before marriage, provided they intend to marry after all. Do not believe those who tell you that there is no harm in filthy words, provided you do not do filthy things; and no harm in swearing, provided you do not mean the curses which you speak. Do not believe those who tell you there is no harm in poaching another man's game, provided you do not steal his poultry, or anything except his game. Do not believe those who tell you that there is no harm in being covetous, provided you do not actually cheat your neighbours; and that the sin lies, not in being covetous at all, but in being more covetous than the law will let you be.

Do not believe those who say to you that you may keep dark thoughts, spite, suspicion, envy, cunning, covetousness in your hearts day after day, year after year, provided you do not openly act on them so as to do your neighbours any great and notorious injury.

Plenty of people will tell you so, and try to deceive you with vain words, and give you arguments, and texts of scripture perhaps, to prove that sin is not sin, and that the children of light may do the works of darkness. But do not believe them, says St. Paul. They are deceivers, and their words are vain. These are the very things which bring down God's wrath on His disobedient children. These are the bad ways which make young people, when they are married, despise, and distrust, and quarrel with each other, and live miserable lives together, as children of wrath, peevish, and wrathful, and discontented with each other, because they feel that God is angry with them, just as Adam in the garden, when he felt that he had sinned, and that God was wroth with him, laid the blame on his wife, and accused her, whom he ought to have loved, and protected, and excused.

These are the bad ways which make people ashamed when they meet a good and a respectable person, make them afraid of being overheard, afraid of being found out, fond of haunting low and out-of-the-way places where they will not be seen; fond of prowling and lurching out at night after their own sinful pleasures, because the darkness hides them from their neighbours, and seems to hide them from themselves, though it cannot hide them from God. These are the sins which make men silent, cunning, dark, sour, double-tongued, afraid to look anyone full in the face, unwilling to make friends, afraid of opening their minds to anyone, because they have something on their

minds which they dare not tell their neighbours, which they dare not even tell themselves, but think about as little as they can help. Do you not know what I mean? Do you not often see it in others? Have you never felt it in yourselves when you have done wrong, that dark feeling within which shows itself in dark looks? You talk of a "dark-looking man," or a "dark sort of person;" and you mean, do you not, a man whom you cannot make out, who does not wish you to make him out; who keeps his thoughts and his feelings to himself, and is never frank or free, except with bad companions, when the world cannot see him; who goes about hanging down his head, and looking out of the corners of his eyes, as if he were afraid of the very sunshine—afraid of the light. We know that such a man has something dark on his mind. We call him a "dark sort of man." And we are right. We say of him what St. Paul says of him in this very epistle, when he says, that sin is darkness, and sinful works the deeds of darkness; and that goodness, and righteousness, and truth, are light, the very light of God and the Spirit of God. Our reason, our common sense, which is given us by God's Spirit, the Spirit of light, makes us use the right words, the same words as St. Paul does, and call sin darkness.

But rather reprove these dark works, says St Paul; that is, look at them, and see that they are utterly worthless and damnable. And how? "All things that are reproved," he says, "are made manifest by the light. For whatsoever makes manifest is light." Whatsoever makes manifest, that is, makes plain and clear. Whatsoever makes you see anything or person in heaven or earth as it really is; whatsoever makes you understand more about anything; whatsoever shows you more what you are, where you are, what

you ought to do; whatsoever teaches you any single hint about your duty to God, or man, or the dumb beasts which you tend, or the soil which you till, or the business and line of life which you ought to follow; whatsoever shows you the right and the wrong in any matter, the truth and the falsehood in any matter, the prudent course and the imprudent course in any matter; in a word, whatsoever makes your mind more clear about any single thing in heaven or earth, is light. For, mind, St. Paul does not say, whatsoever is light makes things plain; but whatsoever makes things plain is light. That is saying a great deal more, thank God; for if he had said, whatsoever is light makes things clear, we should have been puzzled to know what was light; we should have been tempted to settle for ourselves what was light. And, God knows, people in all ages, and people of all religions, Christians as well as heathens, have been tempted to say so, and to misread this text, till they said: "Whatsoever agrees with our doctrine is light, of course, but all other teaching is darkness, and comes from the devil;" and so they oftentimes blasphemed against God's Holy Spirit by calling good actions bad ones, just because they were done by people who did not agree with them, and fell into the same sin as the Pharisees of old, who said that the Lord cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

But St. Paul says, whatsoever makes anything clearer to you, is light. There is the gospel, and there is the good news of salvation again, coming out, as it does all through St. Paul's epistles, at every turn, just where poor, sinful, dark man least expects it. For, what does St. Paul say in the very next verse? "Wherefore," he says, "arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Christ shall give thee

light!" Oh blessed news! *Christ* gives us the light, and therefore we need not be afraid of it, but trust it, and welcome it. And Christ *gives* us the light, therefore we have not to hunt and search after it; for He will give it us. Let us think over these two matters, and see whether there is not a gospel and good news in them for all wretched, ignorant, sinful, dark souls, just as much as for those who are learned and wise, or bright and full of peace.

Christ gives us the light. This agrees with what St. John says, that "He is the light who lights every man who comes into the world." And it agrees also with what St. James says: "Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from God, the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." And it agrees also with what the prophet says, that it is the Spirit of God which gives man understanding. And it agrees also with what the Lord Himself promised us when He was on earth, that He would send down on us the Spirit of God—the Spirit which proceeds alike from Him and from His Father, to guide us into all truth. Ay, my friends, if we really believe this, what a solemn and important thing education would seem to us! If we really believed that all light, all true understanding of any matter, came from the Lord Jesus Christ: and if we remember what the Lord Jesus' character was; how He came to do good to all; to teach not merely the rich and powerful, but the poor, the ignorant, the outcast, the sinful: should we not say to ourselves, then: "If knowledge comes from Christ, who never kept anything to Himself, how dare we keep knowledge to ourselves? If it comes from Him who gave Himself freely for all, surely He means that knowledge should be given freely to all. If He and His Father,

and our Father, will that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, how dare we keep the truth from anyone?" So we should feel it the will of our heavenly Father, the solemn command of our blessed Saviour, that our children, and not only they, but every soul around us, young and old, should be educated in the best possible way, and in any way whatsoever, rather than in none at all. The education of the poor would be, in our eyes, the most sacred duty. A school would be, in our eyes, as necessary and almost as sacred a thing as a church. And to neglect sending our children to school, or to leave our servants or work-people in ignorance, would seem to us an awful sin against the Father of lights; a rebellion against the Lord Jesus, who lights every man who comes into the world, and against our Father in heaven, who willeth not that one of these little ones should perish.

And this is made still more plain and certain by the next word in the text: "Christ shall *give* thee light:" not sell the light, or allow thee to find light after great struggles, and weary years of study: but, *give* thee light. Give it thee of His free grace and generosity. We might have expected that, merely from remembering to whom the light belongs. The mere fact that light belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the express likeness of His Father, might have made us sure that He would give His light freely to the unthankful and to the evil, just as His Father makes His sun to shine alike on the evil and on the good. Therefore this text does not leave us to find out the good news for ourselves. It declares to us plainly that He will give it us, as freely as He gives us all things richly to enjoy.

But, someone will say: You surely cannot mean that we shall have understanding without study?

You cannot mean that we are to become wise without careful thought, or that we are to understand books without learning to read? Of course not, my friends. The text does not say: "Christ will give thee eyes; Christ will give thee sense:" but, "Christ will give thee light." . . . Do you not see the difference? Of what use would your eyes be without light? And of what use would light be if your eyes were shut, and you asleep? In darkness you cannot see. Your eyes are there, as good as ever; the world is there, as fair as ever: but you cannot see it, because there is no light. You can only feel it, by groping about with your hands, and laying hold of whatsoever happens to be nearest you. And do you think that though your bodily eyes cannot see, unless God puts His light in the sky, to shine on everything, and show it you, yet your minds and souls can see without any light from God? Not so, my friends. What the sun is to this earth, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is to the spirit—that is, the reason and conscience—of every man who comes into the world. Now, the good news of holy baptism is, that the light is here; that God's Spirit is with us, to teach us the truth about everything, that we may see it in its true light, as it is, as God sees it; that the day-spring from on high has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace; and that we are children of the light and of the day. But what if those who sit in darkness like the darkness; and wilfully shut their eyes tight that they may not see the day-spring from on high, and the light which God has sent into the world? Then the light will not profit them, but they will walk on still in darkness, not knowing whither they are going.

But some may say, wicked men are very wise;

although they rebel against God's Spirit, and do not even believe in God's Spirit, but say that man's mind can find out everything for itself, without God's help, yet they are very wise. Are they? The Bible tells us again and again that the wisdom of such men is folly; that God takes such wise men in their own craftiness. And the Bible speaks truth. If there is one thing of which I am more certain than another, my friends, it is that, just in proportion as a man is bad, just in proportion as he does not believe in a good Spirit of God who wills to teach him, and gives him light, he is a fool. If there is one thing more than another which such men's books have taught me, it is that they are in darkness, when they fancy they are in the brightest light; that they make the greatest mistakes when they intend to say the cleverest things; and when they least fancy it, fall into nonsense and absurdities, not merely on matters of religion, but on points which they profess to have studied, and in cases where, by their own showing, they ought to have known better. But our business is rather with ourselves. Our business, in this time of Lent, is to see whether we have been shutting our eyes; whether we have been walking in darkness, while God's light is all around us. And how shall we know that? Let St. John tell us: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness until now, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness has blinded his eyes." Hating our brother. Covetousness, which is indeed hating our brother, for it teaches us to prefer our good to our neighbour's good, to fatten ourselves at our neighbour's expense, to get his work, his custom, his money, away from him to ourselves; bigotry, which makes men hate and despise those who differ from them in religion; spite and malice against those who have

injured us; suspicions and dark distrust of our neighbours, and of mankind in general; selfishness, which sets us always standing on our own rights, makes us always ready to take offence, always ready to think that people mean to insult us or injure us, and makes us moody, dark, peevish, always thinking about ourselves, and our plans, or our own pleasures, shut up as it were within ourselves—all these sins, in proportion as anyone gives way to them, darken the eyes of a man's soul. They really and actually make him more stupid, less able to understand his neighbours' hearts and minds, less able to take a reasonable view of any matter or question whatsoever. You may not believe me. But so it is. I know it by experience to be true. I warn you that you will find it true one day; that all spite, passion, prejudice, suspicion, hard judgments, contempt, self-conceit, blind a man's reason, and heart, and soul, and make him stumble and fall into mistakes, even in worldly matters, just as surely as shutting our eyes makes us stumble in broad daylight. He who gives way to such passions is asleep, while he fancies himself broad awake. His life is a dream; and like a dreamer, he sees nothing really, only appearances, fancies, pictures of things in his own selfish brain. Therefore it is written: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." You may say: Can I awaken myself? Perhaps not, unless someone calls you. And therefore Christ calls on you to awake. He says by my mouth: Awake, thou sleeper, and I will give thee light; awake, thou dreamer, who fanciest that the sinful works of darkness can give thee any real profit, any real pleasure; awake, thou sleep-walker, who art going about the world in a dream, groping thy way on from day to day and year to year, only kept from fall and ruin by God's guiding and preserving mercy. Open thine eyes, and

let in the great eternal loving light, wherein God beholds everything which He has made, and behold it is very good. Open thine eyes, for it is day. The light is here if thou wilt but use it. "I will guide thee," saith the Lord, "and inform thee with mine eye, and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go." Only believe in the light. Believe that all knowledge comes from God. Expect and trust that He will give thee knowledge. Pray to Him boldly to give thee knowledge, because thou art sure that He wishes thee to have knowledge. He wishes thee to know thy duty. He wishes thee to see everything as He sees it. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and he shall receive it." And when thou hast prayed for knowledge, expect it to come; as it is written: When thou prayest for anything, believe that thou wilt receive it, and thou wilt receive it. If thou dost not believe that thou wilt have it, of course thou wilt not have it. And why? Because thou wilt pass by it without seeing it. It will be there ready for thee in thy daily walks; Wisdom will cry to thee at the head of every street; God will not deny Himself or break His promise: but thou wilt go past the place where wisdom is, and miss the lessons which God is strewing in thy path, because thou art not looking for them. Wisdom is here, my friends, and understanding is here, and the Spirit of God is here, if our eyes were but open to see them. Oh my friends, of all the sins of which we have to repent in this time of Lent, none ought to give us more solemn and bitter thoughts of shame than the way in which we overlook the teaching of God's Spirit, and shut our eyes to His light, times without number, every day of our lives. My friends, if our hearts were what they ought to be, if we had humble, loving, trustful hearts, full of faith and hope in God's promise

to lead us into all truth, I believe that every joy and every sorrow which befell us, every book which we opened, every walk which we took upon the face of God's earth, ay, every human face into which we looked, would teach us some lesson, whereby we should be wiser, better, more aware of where we are and what God requires of us as human beings, neighbours, citizens, subjects, members of His church. All things would be clear to us; for we should see them in the light of God's Spirit. All things would look bright to us, for we should see them in the light of God's love. All things would work together for good to us, for we should understand each thing as it came before us, and know what it was, and what God meant it for, and how we were to use it. And knowing and seeing what was right, we should see how beautiful it was, and love it, and take delight in doing it, and so we should walk in the light. Dark thoughts would pass away from our minds, dark feelings from our hearts, dark looks from our faces. We should look our neighbours cheerfully and boldly in the face; for our consciences would be clear of any ill-will or meanness toward them. We should look cheerfully and boldly up to God our Father; for we should know that He was with us, guiding and teaching us, well-pleased with all our endeavours to see things as He sees them, and to live and work on earth after His image, and in His likeness. We should look out cheerfully and boldly on the world around us, trying to get knowledge from everything we see, expecting the light, and welcoming it, and trusting it, because we know that it comes from Him who is true and cannot lie, Him who is love and cannot injure, Him who is righteous and cannot lead us into temptation: Jesus Christ, the Light who lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

XXXIX.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

Wherefore I say unto you: All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this world, or in the world to come. —MATTHEW xii. 31, 32.

THESE awful words were the Lord's answer to the Pharisees, when they said of Him: "He casts out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

What was it now which made this speech of the Pharisees so terrible a sin, past all forgiveness?

Of course we all feel that they were very sinful; we shrink with horror from their words as we read them. But why ought they to have done the same? We know, thank God, who Jesus Christ was. But they did not; at that time, when He was first beginning to preach, they hardly could have known. And mind, we must not say: "They ought to have known that He was the Son of God by His having the *power* of casting out devils; "for the Lord Himself says that the sons of these Pharisees used to cast them out also, or that the Pharisees believed that they did; and only asks them: "Why do you say of my casting out devils, what you will not say of your sons' casting them out?" Pray bear this in mind; for if you do

not—if you keep in your mind the vulgar and unscriptural notion that the Pharisees' sin was not being convinced by the great power of Christ's miracles, you will never understand this story, and you will be very likely to get rid of it altogether as speaking of a sin which does not concern you, and a sin which you cannot commit. Now, if the Pharisees did not know that Jesus was the Son of God, the Maker and King of the world, as we do, why were they so awfully wicked in saying that He cast out devils by the prince of the devils? Was it anything more than a mistake of theirs? Was it as wicked as crucifying the Lord? Could it be a worse sin to make that one mistake, than to murder the Lord Himself? And yet it must have been a worse sin. For the Lord prayed for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And these Pharisees, they knew not what they did: and yet the Lord, far from praying for them, told them that even He did not see how such serpents, such a generation of vipers, could escape the damnation of hell.

It is worth our while to think over this question, and try and find out what made the Pharisees' sin so great. And to do that, it will be wiser for us, first, to find out what the Pharisees' sin was; lest we should sit here this morning, and think them the most wicked wretches who ever trod the earth; and then go away, and before a week is over, commit ourselves the very same sin, or one so fearfully like it, that if other people can see a difference between them, I confess I cannot. And to commit such a sin, my good friends, is a far easier thing to do than some people fancy, especially here in England now.

Now, the worst part of the Pharisees' sin was not, as we are too apt to fancy, their insulting the Lord:

but their insulting the Holy Spirit. For what does the Lord Himself say? That all manner of blasphemy as well as sin should be forgiven; that whosever spoke a word against Him, the Son of Man, should be forgiven: but that the unpardonable part of their offence was, that they had blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

And who is the Holy Spirit? The Spirit of holiness. And what is holiness? What are the fruits of holiness? For, as the Lord told the Pharisees on this very occasion, the tree is known by its fruit. What says St. Paul? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. Those who do not show these fruits have not God's Spirit in them. Those who are hard, unloving, proud, quarrelsome, peevish, suspicious, ready to impute bad motives to their neighbours, have not God's Spirit in them. Those who do show these fruits; who are gentle, forgiving, kind-hearted, ready to do good to others, and believe good of others, have God's Spirit in them. For these are good fruits, which, as our Lord tells us, can only spring from a good root. Those who have the fruit must have the root, let their doctrines be what they may. Those who have not the fruit cannot have the root, let their doctrines be what they may.

That is the plain truth; and it is high time for preachers to proclaim it boldly, and take the consequences from the Scribes and Pharisees of this generation. That is the plain truth. Let doctrines be what they will, the tree is known by its fruit. The man who does wrong things is bad, and the man who does right things is good. It is a simple thing to have to say, but very few believe it in these days. Most fancy that the men who can talk most neatly and correctly about certain religious doctrines are good,

and that those who cannot are bad. That is no new notion. Some people thought so in St. John's time; and what did he say of them? "Little children, let no man deceive you; it is he that doeth righteousness who is righteous, even as God is righteous." And again: "He who says, I know God, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." St. John was the apostle of love. He was always preaching the love of God to men, and entreating men to love one another. His own heart was overflowing with love. Yet when it came to such a question as that; when it came to people's pretending to be religious and orthodox, and yet neither obeying God nor loving their neighbours, he could speak sternly and plainly enough. He does not say: "My dear friends, I am sorry to have to differ from you, but I am afraid you are mistaken;" he says: "You are liars, and there is no truth in you."

Now this was just what the Pharisees had forgotten. They had got to think, as too many have nowadays, that the sign of a man's having God's Spirit in him, was his agreeing with them in doctrine. But if he did not agree with them; if he would not say the words which they said, and did not belong to their party, and side with them in despising every one who differed from them, it was no matter to them, as they proved by their opinion of Jesus Himself, how good he might be, or how much good he might do; how loving, gentle, patient, benevolent, helping, and caring for poor people; in short, how like God he was; all that went for nothing if he was not of their party. For they had forgotten what God was like. They forgot that God was love and mercy itself, and that all love and mercy must come from God; and that, therefore, no one, let his creed or his doctrine be what it might,

could possibly do a loving or merciful thing, but by the grace and inspiration of God, the Father of mercies. And yet their own prophets of the Old Testament had told them so, when they ascribed the good deeds of heathens to the inspiration of God, just as much as the good deeds of Jews, and agreed, as they do in many a text, with what St. James, himself a Jew, said afterwards: "Be not deceived; every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." But the Pharisees, like too many nowadays, did not think so. They thought that good and perfect gifts might some of them very well come from below, from the father of darkness and cruelty. They saw the Lord Jesus Christ doing good things; driving out evil, and delivering men from the power of it; healing the sick, cleansing the leper, curing the mad, preaching the gospel to the poor: and yet they saw in that no proof that God's Spirit was working in Him. Of course, if He had been one of their own party, and had held the same doctrines as they held, they would have praised Him loudly enough, and held Him up as a great saint of their school, and boasted of all His good deeds as proofs of how good their party was, and how its doctrines came from God. But as long as He was not one of them, His good works went for nothing. They could not see God's likeness in that loving and merciful character. All His charity and benevolence made them only hate Him the more, because it made them the more afraid that He would draw the people away from them. "And of course," they said to themselves, "whosoever draws people away from us, must be on the devil's side. We know all God's law and will. No one on earth has anything to teach us. And therefore, as for any one who differs from us, if he

cast out devils, it must be because the devil is helping him, for his own purposes, to do it."

In one word, then, the sin of these Pharisees, the unpardonable sin, which ruins all who give themselves up to it, was bigotry; calling right wrong, because it did not suit their party prejudices to call it right. They were fancying themselves very religious and pious, and all the while they did not know right when they saw it; and when the Lord came doing right, they called it wrong, because He did not agree with their doctrines. They fancied they were the only people on earth who knew how to worship God perfectly; and yet while they pretended to worship Him, they did not know what He was like. The Lord Jesus came down, the perfect likeness of God's glory, and the express pattern of His character, helping, and healing, and delivering the souls and bodies of all poor wretches whom He met; and these Pharisees could not see God's Spirit in that; and because it was certainly not their own spirit, called it the spirit of a devil, and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Right and Love.

This was bigotry, the flower and crown of all sins into which man can fall; the worst of all sins, because a man may keep from every other sin with all his might and main, as the Pharisees did, and yet be led by bigotry into almost every one of them without knowing it; into harsh and uncharitable judgment; into anger, clamour, and railing; into misrepresentation and slander; and fancying that the God of truth needs the help of their lying; perhaps, as has often happened, alas! already, into devilish cruelty to the souls and bodies of men. The worst of all sins; because a man who has given up his heart to bigotry can have no forgiveness. He cannot; for how can a

man be forgiven unless he repent? and how can a bigot repent? how can he confess himself in the wrong, while he fancies himself infallibly in the right? As the Lord said to these very Pharisees: "If ye had been blind, ye had had no sin: but now ye say We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

How can the bigot repent? for repenting is turning to God; and how can a man turn to God who does not know where to look for God, who does not know who God is, who mistakes the devil for God, and fancies the all-loving Father to be a taskmaster, and a tyrant, and an accuser, and a respecter of persons, without mercy or care for ninety-nine hundredths of the souls which He has made? How can he find God? He does not know whom to look for.

How can the bigot repent? for to repent means to turn from wrong to right; and he has lost the very notion of right and wrong, in the midst of all his religion and his fine doctrines. He fancies that right does not mean love, mercy, goodness, patience, but notions like his own; and that wrong does not mean hatred, and evil-speaking, and suspicion, and uncharitableness, and slander, and lying, but notions unlike his own. What he agrees with he thinks is heavenly, and what he disagrees with is of hell. He has made his own god for himself out of himself. His own prejudices are his god, and he worships them right worthily; and if the Lord were to come down on earth again, and would not say the words which he is accustomed to say, it would go hard but he would crucify the Lord again, as the Pharisees did of old.

My friends, there is too much of this bigotry, this blasphemy against God's Spirit, abroad in England now. May God keep us all from it! Pray to Him night and day, to give you His Spirit, that you may

not only be loving, charitable, full of good works yourselves, but may be ready to praise and enjoy a good, and loving, and merciful action, whosoever does it, whether he be of your religion or not; for nothing good is done by any living man without the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit of God, the Father of lights, from whom comes down every good and perfect gift. And whosoever tries to escape from that great truth, when he sees a man whose doctrines are wrong doing a right act, by imputing bad motives to him, or saying: "His actions must be evil, however good they may look, because his doctrines are wrong," —that man is running the risk of committing the very same sin as the Pharisees, and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, by calling good evil. And be sure, my friends, that whosoever indulges, even in little matters, in hard judgments, and supicions, and hasty sneers, and loud railing, against men who differ from him in religion, or politics, or in anything else, is deadening his own sense of right and wrong, and sowing the seeds of that same state of mind, which, as the Lord told the Pharisees, is utterly the worst into which any human being can fall.

XL.

THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.—ROMANS viii. 15.

SOME of you here may not understand this text at all. Some of you, perhaps, may misunderstand it; for it is not an easy one. Let us, then, begin, by finding out the meaning of each word in it; and, let us first see what is the meaning of the spirit of bondage unto fear. Bondage means slavery; and the spirit of bondage means the spirit which makes men look up to God as slaves do to their taskmaster. Now, a slave obeys his master from fear only; not from love or gratitude. He knows that his master is stronger than he is, and he dreads being beaten and punished by him; and therefore, he obeys him only by compulsion, not of his own good will. This is the spirit of bondage; the slavish, superstitious spirit in religion, into which all men fall, in proportion as they are mean, and sinful, and carnal, fond of indulging themselves, and bearing no love to God or right things. They know that God is stronger than they; they are afraid that God will take away comforts from them if they offend Him; they have been taught that He will cast them into endless torment if they offend Him; and, therefore, they are afraid to do wrong. They love what is wrong, and would like to do it; but they dare not, for fear of

God's punishment. They do not really fear God; they only fear punishment, misfortune, death, and hell. That is better, perhaps, than no religion at all. But it is not the faith which *we* ought to have.

In this way the old heathens lived: loving sin and not holiness, and yet continually tormented with the fear of being punished for the very sins which they loved; looking up to God as a stern taskmaster; fancying Him as proud, and selfish, and revengeful as themselves; trying one day to quiet that wrath of His which they knew they deserved, by all sorts of flatteries and sacrifices to Him; and the next day trying to fancy that He was as sinful as themselves, and was well-pleased to see them sinful too. And yet they could not keep that lie in their hearts; God's light, which lights every man who comes into the world, was too bright for them, and shone into their consciences, and showed them that the wages of sin was death. The law of God, St. Paul tells us, was written in their hearts; and how much soever, poor creatures, they might try to blot it out and forget it, yet it would rise up in judgment against them, day by day, night by night, convincing them of sin. So they in their terror sold themselves to false priests, who pretended to know of plans for helping them to escape from this angry God, and gave themselves up to superstitions, till they even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils, in some sort of confused hope of buying themselves off from misery and ruin.

And in the same way the Jews lived, for the most part, before the Lord Jesus came in the flesh of man. Not so viciously and wickedly, of course, because the law of Moses was holy, and just, and good; the law which the Lord Himself had given them, because it was the best for them then; because they were too sinful,

and slavish, and stupid, for anything better. But, as St. Paul says, Moses's law could not give them life, any more than any other law can. That is, it could not make them righteous and good; it could not change their hearts and lives; it could only keep them from outward wrong-doing by threats and promises, saying: "Thou shalt not." It could, at best, only show them how sinful their own hearts were; how little they loved what God commanded; how little they desired what He promised; and so it made them feel more and more that they were guilty, unworthy to look up to a holy God, deserving His anger and punishment, worthy to die for their sins; and thus by the law came the knowledge of sin, a deeper feeling of guilt, and shame, and slavish dread of God, as St. Paul sets forth, with wonderful wisdom, in the seventh chapter of Romans.

Now, let us consider the latter half of the text. "But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."

What is this adoption? St. Paul tells us in the beginning of the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Galatians. He says: As long as a man's heir is a child, and under age, there is no difference in law between him and a slave. He is his father's property. He must obey his father, whether he chooses or not; and he is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed by his father; that is, until he comes of age, as we call it. Then he becomes his own master. He can inherit and possess property of his own after that. And from that time forth the law does not bind him to obey his father; if he obeys him it is of his own free will, because he loves, and trusts, and reverences his father.

Now, St. Paul says, this is the case with us. When we were infants, we were in bondage under the elements of the world; kept straight, as children are, by rules

which they cannot understand, by the fear of punishment which they cannot escape, with no more power to resist their father than slaves have to resist their master. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under a law, that He might redeem those who were under a law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

As much as to say: You were God's *children* all along: but now you are more; you are God's sons. You have arrived at man's estate; you are men in body and in mind; you are to be men in spirit, men in life. You are to look up to the great God who made heaven and earth, and know, glorious thought! that He is as truly your Father as the men whose earthly sons you call yourselves. And if you do this, He will give you the Spirit of adoption, and you shall be able to call Him Father with your hearts, as well as with your lips; you shall know and feel that He is your Father; that He has been loving, watching, educating, leading you home to Him all the while that you were wandering in ignorance of Him, in childish self-will, and greediness after pleasure and amusement. He will give you His Spirit to make you behave like His sons, to obey Him of your own free will, from love, and gratitude, and honour, and filial reverence. He will make you love what He loves, and hate what He hates. He will give you clear consciences and free hearts, to fear nothing on earth or in heaven, but the shame and ingratitude of disobeying your Father.

The Spirit of adoption, by which you look up to God as your Father, is your right. He has given it to you, and nothing but your own want of faith, and wilful turning back to cowardly superstition, and to the wilful sins which go before superstition, and come after it, can take it from you. So said St. Paul to the Romans

and the Galatians, and so I have a right, ay, and a bounden duty, to say to every man and woman in this church this day.

For, my dear friends, if you ask me, what has this to do with us? Has it not everything to do with us? Whether we are leading good lives, or middling lives, or utterly bad worthless lives, has it not everything to do with us? Who is there here who has not at times said to himself: "God so holy, and pure, and glorious; while I am so unjust, and unclean, and mean! And God so great and powerful; while I am so small and weak! What shall I do? Does not God hate and despise me? Will He not take from me all which I love best? Will He not hurl me into endless torment when I die? How can I escape from Him? Wretched man that I am, I cannot escape from Him! How, then, can I turn away His hate? How can I make Him change His mind? How can I soothe Him and appease Him? What shall I do to escape hell-fire?"

Did you ever have such thoughts? But, did you find those thoughts, that slavish terror of God's wrath, that dread of hell, made you any *better* men? I never did. I never saw them make any human being better. Unless you go beyond them—as far beyond them as heaven is beyond hell, as far above them as a free son is above a miserable crouching slave, they will do you more harm than good. For this is all that I have seen come of them: That all this spirit of bondage, this slavish terror, instead of bringing a man nearer to God, only drove him further from God. It did not make him hate what was wrong; it only made him dread the punishment of it. And then, when the first burst of fear cooled down, he began to say to himself: "I can never atone for my sins. I can never win back God to love me. What is done, is done. If I cannot escape

punishment, let me be at least as happy as I can while it lasts. If it does not come to-day, it will come to-morrow. Let me alone, thou tormenting conscience. Let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die!" And so back rushed the poor creature into all his wrong-doing again, and fell most probably deeper than ever into the mire, because a certain feeling of desperation and defiance rose up in him, till he began to fancy that his terror was all a dream—a foolish accidental rising up of old superstitious words which he learnt from his mother or his nurse; and he tried to forget it all, and did forget it —God help him!—and his latter end was worse than his first.

How then shall a man escape shame and misery, and an evil conscience, and rise out of these sins of his? For do it he must. The wages of sin is death—death to body and soul; and from sin he must escape.

There is but one way, my friends. There never was but one way. Believe the text, and therefore believe the warrant of your Baptism. Believe the message of your Confirmation.

Your baptism says to you, God does *not* hate you, be you the greatest sinner on earth. He does not hate you. He loves you; for you are His child. He hateth nothing that He hath made. He willeth not the death of a sinner, but that *all* should come to be saved. And your baptism is the sign of that to you. But God hates everything that He has not made; for everything which He has not made is bad; and He has made all things but sin; and therefore He hates sin, and, loving you, wishes to raise you out of sin; and baptism is the sign of that also. Man was made originally in the image and likeness of God, and of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the express image of God the Father; and therefore everything which is sinful is unmanly,

and everything which is truly manful, and worthy of a man, is like Jesus Christ; and God's will is, that you should rise out of all these unmanly sins, to a truly manful life—a life like the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. And baptism is God's sign of this also. That is the meaning of the words in the Baptism Service which tell you that you were baptised into Jesus Christ, that you might put off the old man—the sinful, slavish, selfish, unmanly pattern of life, which we all lead by nature; and put on the new man—the holy and noble, righteous and loving pattern of life, which is the likeness of the Lord Jesus. That is the message of your baptism to you; that you are God's children, and that God's will and wish is that you should grow up to become His *sons*, to serve Him lovingly, trustingly, manfully; and that He can and will give you power to do so—ay, that He has given you that power already, if you will but claim it and use it. But you must claim it and use it, because you are meant not merely to be God's wilful, ignorant, selfish children, obeying Him from mere fear of the rod; but to be His willing, loving, loyal sons. And that is the message which Confirmation brings you. Baptism says: You are God's child, whether you know it or not. Confirmation says: Yes; but now you are to know it, and to claim your rights as His sons, of full age, reasonable and self-governing.

Baptism says: You are regenerated and born from above, by water and the Holy Spirit. Confirmation answers: True, most true; but there is no use in a child's being born, if it never comes to man's estate, but remains a stunted idiot.

Baptism says: You may and ought to become more or less such a man as the Lord Jesus was. Confirmation says: You can become such; for you are no longer

children; you are grown to man's estate in body, you can grow to man's estate in soul if you will. God's Spirit is with you, to show you all things in their true light; to teach you to value them or despise them as you ought; to teach you to love what He loves, and hate what He hates. God wishes you no longer to be merely His children, obeying Him you know not why; still less His slaves, obeying Him from mere brute coward fear, and then breaking loose the moment that you forget Him, and fancy that His eye is not on you: but He wishes you to be His sons; to claim the right and the power which He has given you to trample your sins under foot; to rise up by the strength which God your Father will surely give to those who ask Him; and so to be new men, free men, true men, who do look boldly up to God, knowing that, however wicked they may have been, and however weak they are still, God's love belongs to them, God's help belongs to them, and that those who trust in Him shall never be confounded, but shall go on from strength to strength to the measure of the stature of a perfect man, to the noble likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

For this is the message of the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, to which you have been all called this day. That sacrament tells you that in spite of all your daily sins and failings, you can still look up to God as your Father; to the Lord Jesus Christ as your life; to the Holy Spirit as your guide and your inspirer; that though you be prodigal sons, your Father's house is still open to you, your Father's eternal love ready to meet you afar off, the moment that you cry from your heart: "Father, I have sinned;" and that you must be converted and turn back to God your Father, not merely once for all at Confirmation, or at any other time, but weekly, daily, hourly, as

often as you forget and disobey Him; and that He will receive you. This is the message of the blessed sacrament, that though you cannot come there trusting in your own righteousness, you can come trusting in His manifold and great mercies; that though you are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under His table, yet He is the same Lord whose property is ever to have mercy; that He will, as surely as He has appointed that sign of the bread and wine, grant you so to eat and drink that spiritual flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the life of the world, that your sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and your souls washed in His most precious blood, and that you may dwell in Him, and He in you, for ever.

XLI.

THE FALL.

As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for that all have sinned.—ROMANS v. 12.

WE have been reading the history of Adam's fall. With that fall we have all to do; for we all feel the fruits of it in the sinful corruptions which we bring into the world with us. And more, every fall which we have is like Adam's fall: every time we fall into wilful sin, we do what Adam did, and act over again, each of us many times in our lives, that which he first acted in the garden of Paradise. At least, all mankind suffer for something. Look at the sickness, death, bloodshed, oppression, spite, and cruelty, with which the world is so full now, of which it has been full, as we know but too well from history, ever since Adam's time. The world is full of misery, there is no denying that. How did that come? It must have come somehow. There must be some reason for all this sorrow. The Bible tells us a reason for it. If anyone does not like the Bible reason, he is bound to find a better reason. But what if the Bible reason, the story of Adam's fall, be the only rational and sensible explanation which ever has been, or ever will be given, of the way in which death and misery came among men?

Some people will say: What puzzle is there in it? All animals die, why should not man? All animals fight and devour each other, why should not man do so

too? But why need we suppose that man is fallen? Why should he not have been meant by nature to be just what he is? Some scholars who fancy themselves wise, and think that they know better than the Bible, will say that now, and pride themselves on having said a very fine thing; ignorant men, too, often are led into the same mistake, and are willing enough to say: "What if we are brutish, and savage, and ignorant, and spiteful, indulging ourselves, hating and quarrelling with each other? God made us what we are, and we cannot help it." But there is a voice in the heart of every man, and just in proportion as a man is a man, and not a beast and a savage, that voice cries in his heart more loudly: No; God did not make you what you are. You are not meant to be what you are, but something better. You are not meant to fight and devour each other as the animals do; for you are meant to be better than they. You are not meant to die as the animals do; for you feel something in you which cannot die, which hates death. You may try to be a mere savage and a beast, but you cannot be content to be so. And yet you feel ready to fall lower, and get more and more brutish. What can be the reason? There must be something wrong about men, something diseased and corrupt in them, or they would not have this continual discontent with themselves for being no better than they are; this continual hankering and longing after some happiness, some knowledge, some good and noble state which they do not see round them, and never have felt in themselves. Man must have fallen, fallen from some good and right state into which he was put at first, and for which he is hankering and craving now. There must be an original sin in him; that is, a sin belonging to his origin, his race, his breed, as we say, which has been handed down from father

to son; an original sin as the church calls it. And I believe firmly that the heart of man, even among savages, bears witness to the truth of that doctrine, and confesses that we are fallen beings, let false philosophers try as they will to persuade us that we are not.

Then, again, there are another set of people, principally easy, well-to-do, respectable people, who run into another mistake, the same into which the Pelagians did in old time. They think: "Man is not fallen. Every man is born into the world quite good enough, if he chose to remain good. Every man can keep God's laws if he likes, or at all events keep them well enough." As for his having a sinful nature which he got from Adam, they do not believe that really, though often they might not like to say so openly. They think: "Adam fell, and he was punished; and if I fall I shall be punished; but Adam's sin is nothing to me, and has not hurt me. I can be just as good and right as Adam was, if I like." That is a comfortable doctrine enough for easy-going well-to-do folks, who have but few trials, and few temptations, and who love little because little has been forgiven them. But what comfort is there in that for poor sinners, who feel sinful and base passions dragging them down, and making them brutish and miserable, and yet feel that they cannot conquer their sins of themselves, cannot help doing wrong, all the while they know that it is wrong? They feel that they have something more in them than a will and power to do what they choose. They feel that they have a sinful nature which keeps their will and reason in slavery, and makes sin a hard bondage, a miserable prison-house, from which they cannot escape. In short, they feel and know that they are fallen. Small comfort, too, to every thinking man, who looks upon the great nations

of savages, which have lived, and live still, upon God's earth, and sees how, so far from being able to do right if they choose, they go on from father to son, generation after generation, doing wrong, more and more, whether they like or not; how they become more and more children of wrath, given up to fierce wars, and cruel revenge, and violent passions, all their thought, and talk, and study, being to kill and to fight; how they become more and more children of darkness, forgetting more and more the laws of right and wrong, becoming stupid and ignorant, until they lose the very knowledge of how to provide themselves with houses, clothes, fire, or even to till the ground, and end in feeding on roots and garbage, like the beasts which perish. And how, too, long before they fall into that state, death works in them. How, the lower they fall, and the more they yield to their original sin and their corrupt nature, they die out. By wars with each other; by murdering their own children, to avoid the trouble of rearing them; by diseases which they know not how to cure, and which they too often bring on themselves by their own brutishness; by bad food, and exposure to the weather, they die out, and perish off the face of the earth, fulfilling the Lord's words to Adam: "Thou shalt surely die." I do not say that their souls go to hell. The Bible tells us nothing of where they go to. God's mercy is boundless. And the Bible tells us that sin is not imputed where there is no law, as there is none among them. So we may have hope for them, and leave them in God's hand But what can we hope for them who are utterly dead in trespasses and sins? Well for them, if, having fallen to the likeness of the brutes, they perish with the brutes. I fancy if you, as some may, ever go to Australia, and there see the wretched black people,

who are dying out there, faster and faster, year by year, after having fallen lower than the brutes, then you will understand what original sin may bring a man to, what it would have brought us to, had not God in His mercy raised us and our forefathers up from that fearful down-hill course, when we were on it fifteen hundred years ago.

And another thing which shows that these poor savages are not as God intended them to be, but are falling, generation after generation, by the working of original sin, is, that they, almost all of them, show signs of having been better off long ago. Many, like the South Sea Islanders, have curious arts remaining among them in spite of their brutish ignorance, which they could only have learned when they were far more clever and civilised than they are now. And almost all of them have some sad remembrance, handed down from father to son, kept up in songs and foolish tales, of having been richer, and more prosperous, and more numerous, a long while ago. They will confess to you, if you ask them, that they are worse than their fathers—that they are going down, dying out—that the gods are angry with them, as they say. The Lord have mercy upon them! But what is, to my mind, the most awful part of the matter remains yet to be told—and it is this: That man may actually fall by original sin too low to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, and be recovered again by it. For the negroes of Africa and the West Indies, though they have fallen very low, have not fallen too low for the gospel. They have still understanding left to take it in, and conscience, and sense of right and wrong enough left to embrace it; thousands of them do embrace it, and are received unto righteousness, and lead such lives as would shame many a white Englishman, born and bred under the gospel.

But the black people in Australia, who are exactly of the same race as the African negroes, cannot take in the gospel. They seem to have become too stupid to understand it; they seem to have lost the sense of sin and of righteousness too completely to care about it. All attempts to bring them to a knowledge of the true God have as yet failed utterly. God's grace is all-powerful; He is no respecter of persons; and He may yet, by some great act of His wisdom, quicken the dead souls of these poor brutes in human shape. But, as far as we can see, there is no hope for them: but, like the Canaanites of old, they must perish off the face of the earth, as brute beasts.

I have said so much to show you that man is fallen; that there is original sin, an inclination to sin and fall, sink down lower and lower, in man. Now comes the question: What is this fall of man? I said that the Bible tells us rationally enough. And I have also made use several times of words, which may have hinted to some of you already what Adam's fall was. I have spoken of the likeness of the beasts, and of men becoming like beasts by original sin. And this is why I said it.

If you want to understand what Adam's fall was, you must understand what he fell from, and what he fell to. That is plain.

Now, the Bible tells us, that he fell from God's grace to nature.

What is nature? Nature means what is born, and lives, and dies, and is parted and broken up, that the parts of it may go into some new shape, and be born, and live, and die again. So the plants, trees, beasts, are a part of nature. They are born, live, die; and then that which was them goes into the earth, or into the stomachs of other animals, and becomes in time part of that animal, or part of the tree or flower, which

grows in the soil into which it has fallen. So the flesh of a dead animal may become a grain of wheat, and that grain of wheat again may become part of the body of an animal. You all see this every time you manure a field, or grow a crop. Nature is, then, that which lives to die, and dies to live again in some fresh shape. And, in the first chapter of Genesis, you read of God creating nature—earth, and water, and light, and the heavens, and the plants and animals each after their kind, born to die and change, made of dust, and returning to the dust again. But after that we read very different words; we read that when God created man, He said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." He was made in God's likeness; therefore he could only be right in as far as he was like God. And he could not be like God if he did not will what God willed, and wish what God wished. He was to live by faith in God; he was justified by faith in God, and by that only.

Never fancy that Adam had any righteousness of his own, any goodness of which he could say: "This is mine, part of me; I may pride myself on it." God forbid. His righteousness consisted, as ours must, in looking up to God, trusting Him utterly, believing that he was to do God's will, and not his own. His spirit, his soul, as we call it, was given to him for that purpose, and for none other, that it might trust in God and obey God, as a child does his father. He had a free will; but he was to use that will as we must use our wills, by giving up our will to God's will, by clinging with our whole hearts and souls to God.

Adam fell. He let himself be tempted by a beast,

by the serpent. How, we cannot tell: but so we read. He took the counsel of a brute animal, and not of God. He chose between God and the serpent, and he chose wrong. He wanted to be something in himself; to have a knowledge and power of his own, to use it as he chose. He was not content to be in God's likeness; he wanted to be as a god himself. And so he threw away his faith in God, and disobeyed Him. And instead of becoming a god, as he expected, he became an animal; he put on the likeness of the brutes, who cannot look up to God in trust and love, who do not know God, do not obey Him, but follow their own lusts and fancies, as they may happen to take them. Whether the change came on him all at once, the Bible does not say: but it did come on him; for from him it has been handed down to all his children even to this day. Then was fulfilled against him the sentence, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Not that he died that moment; but death began to work in him. He became like the branch of a tree cut off from the stem, which may not wither at the instant it is cut off, but it is yet dead, as we find out by its soon decaying. He had come down from being a son of God, and he had taken his place in nature, among the things which grow only to die; and death began to work in him, and in his children after him. He handed down his nature to his children as the animals do; his children inherited his faults, his weaknesses, his diseases, the seed of death which was in him, just as the animals pass down to their breed, their defects, and diseases, and certainty of dying after their appointed life is past.

For this, my friends, is the lesson which Adam's fall teaches us, that in God alone is the life of immortal souls, whether of men, or of angels, or of archangels; and in God alone is righteousness; in God alone is every

good thing, and all good in men or angels comes from Him, and is only His pattern, His likeness; and that the moment either man or angel sets up his will against God's, he falls into sin, a lie, and death. That He has given us reasonable souls for that one purpose, that with our souls we may look up to Him, with our souls we may cling to Him, with our souls we may trust in Him, with our souls we may understand His will, and see that it is a good, and a right, and a loving will, and delight in it, and obey it, and find all our delight and glory, even as the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man, the New Adam, did, in doing not our own will, but the will of our Father.

For, as St. Augustine says, man may live in two ways, either according to himself, or according to God; by self-will or by faith. He may determine to do his own will or to do God's will, to be his own master or to let God be his master, to seek his own glory, and try to be something fine and grand in himself: or he may seek God's glory and obey Him, believing that what God commands is the only good for him, what makes God to be honoured in the eyes of his neighbours is the only real honour for him.

But, says St. Augustine, if he tries to live according to himself, he falls into misery, because he was meant to live according to God. So he puts himself into a lie, into a false and wrong state; and because he has cut himself off from God he falls below what a man should be; and puts on more and more of the likeness of the beast, and is more and more the slave of his own lusts, and passions, and fancies, as the dumb animals are. And, as St. Paul says, the animal man, the carnal man, understands not the things of God. And we need no one to tell us that this is the state of nature which we bring into the world with us. We feel it; from our very

childhood, from the earliest time we can recollect, have we not had the longing to do what we liked? to please ourselves, to pride ourselves on ourselves, to set up our own wills against our parents, against what we learnt out of the Bible? Ay, has not this wilful will of ours been so strong, that often we would long after a thing, we would determine to have it, only because we were forbidden to have it; we might not care about the thing when we had it, but we would have our own way just because it was our own way. In short, like Adam, we would be as gods, knowing good and evil, and choosing for ourselves what we should call good and what we shall call evil. And, my dear friends, consider: did not every wrong that we ever did come from this one root of all sin—determining to have our own way? That root-sin of self-will first brought death and misery among mankind; that sin of self-will keeps it up still: that sin of self-will it is which hinders sinners from giving themselves up to God; and that sin must be broken through, or religion is a mockery and a dream.

Oh my friends, say to yourselves once for all, I was made in God's likeness; and therefore His will, and not my own, I must do. I have no wisdom of my own, no strength of mind of my own, no goodness of my own, no lovingness of my own. God has them all; God, who is wisdom, strength, goodness, love; and I have none. And then, when the fearful thought comes over you: "I have no goodness, and I cannot have any. I cannot do right. There is no use struggling and trying to be better. My passions, my lusts, my fancies are too strong for me. If I am brutish and low, brutish and low I must remain. If I have fallen in Adam, I must lie in the mire till I die——"

Then, then, my friends, answer yourselves: "No!

Not so. Man fell in the first Adam: but man rose again in the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. I belong no more to the old Adam, who fell in Paradise. I belong to the New Adam, who was conceived without sin, and born of a pure virgin, who lived by perfect faith, in perfect obedience, doing His Father's will only, even to the death upon the cross, wherein He took away the sins of the whole world. And now for His sake my original sin, my fallen, brutish nature, is forgiven me. God does not hate me for it. He loves me, because I belong to His Son. My baptism is a witness and a warrant, a sign and a covenant between me and God, that I belong not to old Adam of Paradise, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, who sits at God's right hand. The cross which was signed on my forehead when I was baptised is God's sign to me that I am to sacrifice myself and give up my own will to do God's will, even as the Lord Jesus did when He gave Himself to die, because it was His Father's will. And because I belong to Jesus Christ, because God has called me to be His child, therefore He will help me. He will help me to conquer this low, brutish nature of mine. He will put His Spirit into me, the Spirit of His Son Jesus Christ, that I may trust Him, cry to Him, My Father! that I may love Him; understand His will, and see how good, and noble, and beautiful, and full of peace and comfort it is; delight in obeying Him; glory in sacrificing my own fancies and pleasures for His sake; and find my only honour, my only happiness, in doing His will on earth as saints and angels do it in heaven.

XLII.

GOD'S COVENANTS.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.—GENESIS ix. 13.

THE text says that God made a covenant with Noah, and with his seed after him—that is, with all mankind; with us who sit here, and our children after us, and with all human beings who will ever live upon the face of the earth. God made a covenant with them. Now, what is a covenant? We say that two men make a covenant with each other when they make a bargain, an agreement; in this way: If you will do this thing, then I will do that; but if you will not do this thing, I will not do that. If you do not keep to our agreement, I am free of it. If I do not do my part of the agreement, you are free. Is not that what we call a covenant—a bargain between two parties, which, if either party breaks it, becomes null and void, and binds neither? Let us see whether God's covenants with man are of this kind.

Does God say to Noah: "If you and your children are righteous, I will look upon the rainbow, and remember my covenant: but if you and your children are unrighteous, I will not look on the rainbow, and I will break my covenant because you have broken it?" We read no such words; God made no conditions with Noah and his sons. Whether they forgot the covenant or not, God would remember it. It was a covenant of

free grace, even as all God's covenants are. Not a bargain, but a promise. "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that I will not fail David." By Himself He sware to Abraham: "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." That is the form of God's covenants. God swears by Himself—by God who cannot change. If God can change, then His covenant can change. If God can fail Himself, then can He fail His covenant to which He has sworn by Himself. If it had been a mere bargain, like men's bargains, and not a promise out of His absolute love, His free grace, His boundless mercy, would He have sworn by Himself? Nay, rather, He would have sworn by Abraham: "By thy obedience or disobedience I swear to bless thee or curse thee." But He swore by Himself, the absolute, the unchangeable, the Giver whose name is Love.

Consider now the token of the covenant which God gave to Noah. It was the rainbow. What is the rainbow? Sunlight turned back to our eye, through drops of falling rain. What sign could be more simple? And yet what sign could be more perfect? Noah's sons would fear that another flood was coming, perhaps flood after flood. The token of the rainbow said to them, No. Floods and rain are not to be the custom of this earth. Sunshine is to be the custom of it. Do not fear the clouds and storm and rain; look at the bow in the cloud, in the very rain itself. That is a sign that the sun, though you cannot see it, is shining still. That up above, beyond the cloud, is still sunlight, and warmth, and cloudless blue sky. Believe in God's covenant. Believe that the sun will conquer the clouds, warmth will conquer cold, calm will conquer storm, fair will conquer foul, light will conquer darkness, joy will conquer sorrow, life conquer death, love conquer

destruction and the devouring floods; because God is light, God is love, God is life, God is peace and joy eternal and without change, and labours to give life, and joy, and peace, to man and beast and all created things. This was the meaning of the rainbow. Not a sudden or strange token, a miracle, as men call it, like as some voice out of the sky, or fiery comet, might have been; but a regular, orderly, and natural sign, to witness that God is a God of order. Whenever there was a rainy day there might be a rainbow. It came by the same laws by which everything else comes in the world. It was a witness that God who made the world is the friend and preserver of man; that His promises are like the everlasting sunshine which is above the clouds, without spot or fading, without variableness or shadow of turning.

And do you fancy, my friends, that the new covenant, the covenant which God made with all mankind in the blood of His only-begotten Son, is narrower or weaker than the covenant which He made with Noah, Abraham, and David? He asked no conditions from them. Do you think He asks them from us? He called them by free grace. Do you think He calls us by anything less? He swore by Himself to them. How much more has He sworn by Himself to us? He who was born, and died, and rose again for us, who now sits at the right hand of the Father, very Man of the substance of a human mother, yet very God of very God begotten.

His covenants of old stood true and faithful, however disobedient and unfaithful men might be; as it is written: "I have sworn once for all by my holiness, that I will not fail David." And those words, the New Testament declares to us, again and again, are true of the new covenant, and fulfilled in the Lord

Jesus Christ, into whose name we are baptized. Yes; into whose name we are baptized. There is the sign of the new covenant; of a covenant of free grace. Therefore we can bring our children to be baptized as we were baptized ourselves, before they have done either good or evil, for a sign that God's love is over them, God's kingdom is their inheritance, God's love their everlasting portion.

But we may fall from grace; and then what good will our baptism be to us? We shall be lost, just as if we had never been baptized.

My friends, if, though the sun was shining in the sky, you shut your eyes close, and kept out the light, what use would the sunlight be to you? You would stumble, and fall, and come to harm, as certainly as in the darkest night. But would the sun go out of the sky, my friends, because you were unwise enough to shut your eyes to it? The sun would still be there, shining as bright as ever. You would have only to be reasonable and to open your eyes, and you would see your way again as well as ever.

So it is with holy baptism. In it we were made members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. God's love is above us and around us, like a warm, bright, life-giving sun. We may shut our eyes to it, but it is there still. We may disbelieve our baptism covenant, but it is true still. We are children of God; and nothing that we can do, no sin, no unfaithfulness of ours, can make us anything else. We can no more become not God's children, than a child can become not his own father's son. But this we can do by sinning, by disbelieving that we are God's children, by behaving as the devil's children when we are God's; we can believe ourselves not God's children when we are; we can try to be what we are not; we can enter into a lie, and into the

misery to which all lies lead; we can walk in darkness, and stumble, and fall, when all the while we are children of the light, and have only to open our eyes to walk in the light. Ay, we can shut our eyes to the light so long, that at last we forget that there is any light at all; and that is the gate of hell. We may wrap ourselves up in our selfishness, in selfish pleasures, selfish cunning, selfish covetousness, and selfish pride, till we forget that there is anything better for us than selfishness, till we forget that God is love, and that we His children are meant to be loving even as He is loving; and that also is the gate of hell. And worst and darkest of all, when in that stupid, sinful, loveless state of mind, God's loving Spirit still strives and pleads with us, and tries to awaken us, and terrify us with the sight of the everlasting misery and ruin into which we have thrown ourselves, we may turn those pleadings of God's Spirit, by our own evil wills, into a darker curse than all which have gone before. We may refuse to believe that God is love, and fancy Him as hard, and cruel, and proud, and spiteful, and unloving as we ourselves are. We may refuse, though Scripture, Prayer-book, sacraments, preachers, assure us of it, that God is our Father still; and deny His covenant of baptism, and blaspheme His holy name, by fancying Him our tyrant and taskmaster, who hates us, and willeth the death of a sinner, and has pleasure in the death of him that dieth. And then we may behave according to the lie which we ourselves have invented, and all sorts of inventions of our own to escape God's wrath, when, in reality, it is He who is wishing to turn His wrath away from us; and to win back His favour, when, in reality, it is not we who are out of favour with Him, but He who is out of favour with us, who dread Him and shrink from Him; we may try to deliver ourselves from Him, when all the

while it is He, the very God whom we are dreading and flying from, who alone is able and willing to deliver us; and with all our fears, and self-tormentings, and faithless terrors, and blasphemings of God by fancying Him the very opposite to what He has declared Himself, we shall get no peace of conscience, no deliverance from sins, or from the fear of punishment, but only a fearful and fiery looking forward to judgment, which is hell. That is superstition; hell on earth; when men have so utterly forgotten the likeness of God, which He manifested in His Son Jesus Christ, that they look on Him as a stern and dreadful taskmaster, a tyrant, and not a deliverer. Hell on earth, which may and must lead to hell hereafter; a hell of fear, and doubt, and hatred of Him who is all lovely; the hell whereof it is written, that its worst torment is being cast out from the sight of God: unless the hapless sinner opens his eye and believes the covenant of his baptism, and sees that God cannot lie, God cannot change, cannot break his covenant, cannot alter His love; that though he have left his Father's house, and wandered into far countries, and wasted his Father's substance in riotous living, he is still his Father's son, his Father's house is still where it was from the beginning, his Father's heart still what it was from the beginning; and so arises and goes back to his Father's house, confessing that He is no more worthy to be called His son, willing to be only as one of His hired servants; and then—sees not the stern countenance, the cruel punishments which he dreaded: but—"While he was yet afar off, his Father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him!"

And if, in our sins, our only hope of comfort, and peace, and strength, lies in remembering our baptismal covenant, and being sure and certain that though we

have changed, God has not; that though we are dark, God's love shines bright and clear for ever, how much more when the dark day of affliction comes? Why should I speak of this and that affliction? Each heart knows its own bitterness; each soul has its own sorrow; each man's life has its dark days of storm and tempest, when all his joys seem flown away by some sudden blast of ill-fortune, and the desire of his eyes is taken from him, and all his hopes and plans, all which he intended to do or to enjoy, are hid with blinding mist, so that he cannot see his way before him, and knows not whither to go, and whither to flee for help; when faith in God seems broken up for the moment, when he feels no strength, no will, no purpose, and knows not what to determine, what to do, what to believe, what to care for; when the very earth seems reeling under his feet, and the fountains of the abyss are broken up: then let him think of God's covenant, and take heart; let him think of his baptism, and be at peace. Is the sun's warmth perished out of the sky, because the storm is cold with hail and bitter winds? Is God's love changed, because we cannot feel it in our trouble? Is the sun's light perished out of the sky, because the world is black with cloud and mist? Has God forgotten to give light to suffering souls, because we cannot see our way for a few short days of perplexity?

For this is the gospel, this is the message which we have received from God, to preach to every sad and desolate heart on earth, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. That God is love, and in Him there is no cruelty at all. That God is one, and in Him there is no change at all. And therefore, we all, the most ignorant of us as well as the wisest, the most sinful of us as well as the holiest, the saddest and most wretched of us as well as the happiest, have a right to

join in that Litany which is offered up here thrice every week during the time of Lent, and to call upon God to deliver us and all mankind, not merely because we wish to be delivered from evil, but because God wishes to deliver us from evil. If we pray that Litany in any dark dread of God, in doubt of His love and goodwill towards us, like terrified slaves crying out to a hard taskmaster, and entreating him not to torment them, we do not pray that Litany aright; we do not pray it at all. For it asks God not to leave us alone, but to come to us; not to stop punishing us, but actually Himself to deliver us, to defend us, to set us free. Therefore it begins by calling on God the Father, because He is our Father; on God the Son, because He has already redeemed and bought us for His own; on God the Holy Spirit, because He has been striving with our wilful hearts from our youth up till now, lovingly desiring to teach us, to change us, to sanctify us. Therefore it calls on the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God, because the Son does not love us better than the Father does, or than the Holy Spirit does, but in the life and death of the Man Christ Jesus, whom we call on to deliver us by His birth, His baptism, His death, His resurrection, by all that His manhood did and suffered here on earth, in His life and death, I say, were shown forth bodily the glory, and condescension, and love, and goodwill of the fulness of the Godhead, of all three Persons of the one and undivided Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Therefore we may pray boldly to Him to spare us, because we know that we are already His people, already redeemed with his most precious blood, already declared by holy baptism to be bound to Him in an everlasting covenant. Therefore we may pray boldly to Him not to be angry with us for ever, because we know that He desires to

bless us for ever, if we will only let Him; if we will only let His love have free course, and not shut our hearts to it, and turn our backs upon it. Therefore we can ask Him to deliver us in all time of our tribulation and misery; in all time of the still more dangerous temptations which wealth and prosperity bring with them; in the hour of death, whether of our own death or the death of those we love; in the day of judgment, whereof it is written: "It is God who justifieth us, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died, yea rather who is risen again, who even now maketh intercession for us." To that boundless love of God which He showed forth in the life of Christ Jesus; to that utter and perfect will to deliver us, which God showed forth in the death of Christ Jesus, when the Father spared not His only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him for us; to that boundless love we may trust ourselves, our fortunes, our families, our bodies, our souls, the souls of those we love. Trusting in that great love, we may pray in that Litany for deliverance; to be delivered from distress and accidents, from all sins which drag us down, and make us miserable, ashamed, confused, terrified, selfish, hateful, and hating each other. We may pray to be delivered from evil, because God is righteousness, and hates evil. We may pray to be delivered from our sins, because God is righteousness, and hates our sins. We may pray for the Queen, her ministers, her parliament, because God's love and care is over them; for all orders and ranks of men, whether laymen or clergymen, high or low, in God's holy church; for all who are afflicted and desolate; for all who are wandering in ignorance, and mistakes, and sin; ay, for all mankind, for God loves them all, the Son of God has bought them all with His most precious blood. And however dark, and sad, and sinful

the world may seem around us; however dark, and sad, and sinful our own hearts may be within us, we may find comfort in that Litany, and pour out in it our sorrows and our fears, if we begin only as it begins, with the thought of God who is righteousness, God who is love, God who is the Deliverer. And then, as the rainbow reflects the sunbeams for a sign and token that the sun is shining, though we see it not; so will that blessed Litany, with its sacred name of God, its calls to Him who was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate; its entreaties to God to deliver us, because He is a deliverer; to hear us, and send us good, because He is a good Lord Himself; its remembrances of the noble works which God did in our fathers' days, and in the old time before them; its noble declaration that God does not despise the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of a humble spirit, and that it is the very glory of His name to turn from us those evils which we most justly have deserved — that Litany, I say, will be like a rainbow declaring to our dark and stormy hearts that the sun is shining still above the clouds; that over and above us, and all mankind, and all the changes and chances of this mortal life, is the still bright sunshine, the life-giving warmth of the Sun of Righteousness, the absolute eternal love of our Father who is in heaven, who, as He has declared by the mouth of His only-begotten Son, is perfect in this, that He does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities, but is good to the unthankful and the evil, sending His rain alike upon the just and on the unjust, and making His sun to shine alike upon the evil and the good.

XLIII.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.—1 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

ST. PAUL here sums up in one verse the whole of Christian truth. He gives us in a few words what he says is the great mystery of godliness.

Now, men had been inventing for themselves all kinds of mysteries of godliness; all sorts of mysterious and wonderful notions about God; all sorts of mysterious and strange ceremonies, and ways of pleasing God, or turning away His anger.

And Christian men are apt to do so also, as well as those old heathens. They feel that they are very mysterious and wonderful beings themselves, simply because they are men. They say to themselves: "How strange that I should have a body of flesh and blood, and appetites and passions, like the animals, and yet that I should have an immortal spirit in me. How strange this notion of duty which I have, and which the other animals have not; this notion of its being right to do some things, and wrong to do others! From whence did that notion come? And again, this strange notion which I have, and cannot help having, that I ought to be like God: and yet I do not know what God is like. From whence did that notion come?"

Again: "I fancy that God ought to be good. But how do I know that He really is good? I see the world full of injustice, and misery, and death. How do I know that this is not God's doing, God's fault in some way?"

Again, says a man to himself: "I have a fair right to believe that mankind are not the only persons in the universe—that there are other beings beside God whom I cannot see. I call them angels. I hardly know what I mean by that. The really important question about them to me is: Will they do me harm? Can they do me good? Are they stronger than I? Ought I not to fear them, to try to please them, to keep them favourable to me?"

Again, he asks: "Does God care whether I know what is right? Does God care to teach me about Himself? Is God desirous that I should do my duty? For if He does not care about my being good, why should I care about it?"

Again, he asks: "But if I knew my duty, might I not find it something too far-fetched, too difficult, for poor simple folk to do: so that I should be forced to leave a right life to great scholars, and to rich people, or to people of a very devout delicate temper of mind, who have a natural turn that way?"

And last of all: "Even if I did struggle to do right; even if I gave up everything for the sake of doing right; how do I know that it will profit me to do so? I shall die as every man dies, and then what will become of me? Shall I be a man still, or only—horrible thought!—some sort of empty ghost, a spirit without body, of which I dream, and shudder while I dream of it?"

Men in all ages, heathens and Christians, have been puzzled by such thoughts as these, as soon as

they began to feel that there was a world which they could not see, as well as a world which they could see; a spiritual world, wherein God the Spirit, and their own spirits, and spiritual things, such as right, wrong, duty, reason, love, dwell for ever; and a strange hidden duty on all men to obey that unseen God, and the laws of that spiritual world; in short a mystery of godliness.

Then they have tried to answer these questions for themselves; and have run thereby into all manner of follies and superstitions, and often, too, into devilish cruelties, in the hope of pleasing God according to some mystery of godliness of their own invention.

But to each of these puzzles St. Paul gives an answer in the text. Let us take them each in its order, and you will see what I mean.

The first puzzle was: How is it that while I am like the animals in some things, and yet feel as if I ought to be, and can be, like God in other things? How is it that I feel two powers in me; one dragging me downward to make me lower than the beasts, the other lifting me upwards—I dare not think whither? It seems to me to be my body, my bodily appetites and tempers which drag me down. Is my body me, part of me, or a thing I should be ashamed of, and long to be rid of? I fancy that I can be like God. But can my body be like God? Must I not crush it, neglect it, get rid of it before I can follow the good instinct which draws me upward?

To which St. Paul told Timothy to answer: God was manifest in the flesh. God sent down His only-begotten Son, co-equal and co-eternal with Himself, very God of very God, the very same person who had been putting into men's minds those two notions of which we spoke, that there is a right and a wrong, and that men ought to be like God; Him the Father sent

into the world that He might be born, and live, and die, and rise again, as a man; that so men might see from His example, manifestly and plainly, what God was like, and what man ought to be like. And so Jesus Christ was God, manifested in the flesh.

Now we do know what God is like. We know that He is so like man, that He can take upon Him man's flesh and blood without changing, or lowering, or defiling Himself. That proves that man must have been originally made in God's likeness; that man's being fallen, means man's falling from the likeness of God, and taking up instead with the likeness of the brutes which perish; that the fault cannot be in our bodies, but in our spirits which have yielded to our bodies, and become their slaves instead of their masters, as Christ's Spirit was master of His body. But the Son of God, by being born and living as a man, showed us that we are not fallen past hope, not fallen so low that we cannot rise again. He showed that though mankind are sinful, yet they need not be sinful; for He was a man as exactly, and perfectly, and entirely as we are, and yet in Him was no sin. So He showed that brutishness and sinfulness is not our proper state, but our disease and our fall; and a disease of which we can be cured, a fall out of which we can rise and be renewed into the true and real pattern of mankind, the new Adam, Jesus the sinless Son of Man and Son of God.

The next question, I said, that rose in men's mind was: "How do I know that God is good, as I fancy sometimes that He must be? I see the world full of sin, and injustice, and misery, and death. Perhaps that is God's doing, God's fault." That is a common puzzle enough, and a sad and fearful one. The sin and the misery and the death are here. If God did

not bring it here, yet why did He let it come here? He could have stopped if He would, and kept out all this wretchedness: why did He not? Was He just or loving in letting sin into the world?

To all which St. Paul answers: "God was justified in the Spirit."

You do not see what that has to do with it? Then let me show you.

To be justified means to be shown and proved to be just, righteous. Now what justified God to man was the Spirit of God, as He showed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. For when God became man and dwelt among men, what sort of works were His? What was His conduct, His character; of what sort of spirit did He show Himself to be? He went, we read, doing good, for God was with Him. Not of His own will, but to do His Father's will, and because He was filled without measure by the Spirit of God, He did good, He healed the sick, He rebuked the proud and self-conceited hypocrite, He proclaimed pardon and mercy to the broken-hearted sinner, wearied and worn out by the burden of his sins. Thus, in every action of His life, He was fighting against evil and misery, and conquering it; and so showing that God hates evil and misery, and that the evil and the misery in the world are here against God's will. Strange as it may seem to have to say it, so it is. Jesus Christ showed that howsoever sin and sorrow came into the world, it is God's will and purpose to root them out of the world, and that He is righteous, He is loving, He is merciful, He does and will fight against evil, for those who are crushed by it; and help poor sufferers always when they call upon Him, and often, often, of His most undeserved condescension and free grace, when they are forgetting and disobeying Him. And so by the

good, and loving, and just spirit which Jesus showed, God was justified before men, and showed to be a God of goodness and justice.

The next puzzle, I said, was about angels and spirits, whether we need to pray to them to help us, and not to hurt us. St. Paul answers: God, when He was manifested in the flesh of a man, was seen by these angels. And that is enough for us. They saw the Lord God condescend to be born in a stable, to live as a poor man, to die on the cross. They saw that His will to man was love. And they do His will. And therefore they love men, they help men, they minister to men, because they follow the Lord's example, and do the will of their Father in Heaven, even as we ought to do it on earth. Therefore we have no need to fear them, for they love us already. And, on the other hand, we have no need to pray to them to help us, for they know already that it is their duty to help us. They know that the Son of God has put on us a higher honour than He ever put on them; for He took not on Him the nature of angels, He took on Him the nature of man; and thus, though man was made a little lower than the angels, yet by Christ's taking man's nature, man is crowned with a glory and honour higher than the angels. Know ye not, says St. Paul, that we shall judge angels? And the angels, as they told St. John, are our fellow-servants, not our masters; and they know that; for they saw the Son of God doing utterly His Father's will, and therefore they know that their duty is to do their Father's will also; not to do their own wills, and set themselves up as our masters, to be pleaded with by us. They saw the Son of God take our nature on Him, when they sang to the shepherds on the first Christmas night: "Peace on earth, and good-will toward men;" and therefore they look on us with love and honour,

because we wear the human nature which Christ their Master wore, and are partakers of the Holy Spirit of God, even as they are. For no angel or archangel could do a right thing, any more than we, except by the Holy Spirit of God. And that Holy Spirit is bestowed on the poorest man who asks for it, as freely as upon the highest of the heavenly host.

And this leads us on to the next puzzle of which I spoke: Men were apt, and are apt now, to say to themselves: Does God care whether I know what is right? Does God care to teach me about Himself? Is God desirous that I should do my duty? For if He does not care about my being good, why should I care about it?

To this St. Paul answers: "God, who was manifest in the flesh, was preached to the Gentiles."

God does care that men should know about God; for He loves them. He yearns after them as a father after his children, and He knows that to know God, to know the truth about God, is the beginning of all wisdom, the root of all safety and honour and happiness. He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. And, therefore, when the Son of God died for our sins, He did not stop at that great deed of love; but He ordained Apostles, and put upon them especially and above all men, His Holy Spirit, that they might go and preach to all nations the good news that God had become flesh, and dwelt among men, and borne their sorrows and infirmities, and to baptize them into the very name of God itself, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; that so, instead of fancying now that God did not care for them, they might be sure that God so longed to teach them, that He called every child, even from its cradle, to come into His kingdom, and be taught the whole mystery of godliness.

The next puzzle I mentioned was: "But this right life, this mystery of godliness, is it not something very strange and difficult, and past the understanding of simple men who are not extraordinarily clever and learned scholars or deep philosophers?" To that St. Paul answers: No. It is not past any man. It is not too deep or too difficult for the simplest, the most unlearned countryman. For, says St. Paul in the text, we Apostles have had proof of that; we have tried it; we Apostles preached the mystery of godliness, and it was believed on in the world. People of the world, plain working men and women going about their worldly business, who had no time to be great readers, or great thinkers, or to shut themselves up in monasteries to meditate on heavenly things, but had to live and work in the commonplace, busy, work-day world—they believed our message. We Apostles told them that the Son of God had showed Himself in the likeness of man, and called on every man to repent, and to be such a man as He was. And worldly people believed us, and tried, and found that without giving up their worldly work, or deserting the station in which God had put them, they could live godlike lives, and become the sons of God without rebuke. They saw that scholarship was not wanted, leisure was not wanted, but only the humble heart which hungers and thirsts after righteousness. About their daily work, by their cottage firesides, among their poor neighbours, the Spirit of Almighty God gave them strength to live as Jesus their pattern lived; He filled them with all holy, pure, noble, brave, loving thoughts and feelings, fit for angels and archangels. He enabled them to rise out of their sins, to trample their temptations under foot, to leave their old low brutish sinful way of life behind them, and become new men, and persevere in every

word, and thought, and action, in virtues such as the greatest heathen sages could not copy; ay, even to shed their life-blood freely and boldly in martyrdom, for the sake of God and the truth of God. They, these plain simple people, living in the world, could still live the life of God, and die like heroes for the sake of God.

And this again brings us to the last puzzle of which I spoke: "But what became of those holy and godlike people when they died? What reward did they receive for all they had done, and given up, and suffered? What will become of us after we die? What will the next world be like? What is heaven like? Shall I be able to enjoy it? Shall I be a man there, or only a ghost, a spirit without a body?"

To this St. Paul answers: That Christ, the Son of God, after He was manifested in the flesh, was received up into glory. He does not tell us what heaven is like; for though he had been caught up into the third heaven, yet what he saw there, he says, was unspeakable. He neither ought to tell, or could tell, what he saw. Neither does St. Paul tell us what the next life will be like; for as far as we can find, God had not told him. All he says is: The man Christ Jesus, who walked this earth like other men, was received up into glory; and He did not leave His man's mind, His man's heart, even His man's body, behind Him. He carried up into heaven with Him His whole manhood, spirit, soul, and body, even to the print of the nails in His hands and in His most holy feet, and the wound of the spear in His most holy side. And that is enough for us. Because the man Christ Jesus is in heaven, we as men may ascend to heaven. Where He is we shall be. And what He is, in as far as He is man, we shall be. What we shall be we know not; but this we know, that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And

He is a man still; for it is written: "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And He will be a man at the day of judgment; for it is written that: "God hath ordained a day in which He will judge the world by a man whom He hath chosen." And He will be a man for ever; for it is written: "This man abideth for ever." And He Himself said to His disciples: "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." And again He declared, even when he was on earth, that He was the Son of Man who is in heaven. And in heaven nothing can grow less. But if Christ were not man for ever as well as God, He would become less; for He is now God and man also at once; but if He laid down His manhood, and so became not man any more, but God only, He would become less, which is not to be believed of Him of whom it is written: That Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. For, as the Athanasian creed teaches us, He is not God alone, nor man alone, but God and man is one Christ; and therefore, when St. John declares that Christ shall reign for ever and ever, he declares that He shall reign not only as God, but as man also. Therefore whatever we do not know about the next life, we know this, that we shall be men there; not sinful, weak, and mortal, as we are here, but holy, strong, immortal, after the likeness of our Lord, the firstborn from the dead, who has ascended up on high and raised our human nature to the heaven of heavens, and is gone to prepare a place for us, into which we too shall enter in that day when He shall change these mortal and fallen bodies which we now wear, the bodies of our humiliation, the bodies by wearing which we are now a little lower than the angels; them the Lord will change, that they may be

made like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He subdueth all things unto Himself, that we may see Him face to face, and dwell with Him in the glory of God the Father for ever.

Oh my friends, who is sufficient for these things? What shall we say of man? Is he not indeed fearfully and wonderfully made? Here we are, weak creatures, more liable to disease and death than the dumb beasts round us; full of poverty, and adversity, and longings which are never satisfied; our minds full of mistakes, our hearts full of false conceit, full of spite and folly, struggles, murmurings, quarrellings; our consciences full of the remembrance of sins without number. The greatest of all heathen poets said, that there was not a more miserable and pitiable animal upon the earth than man. He knew no better. He could not know better. How could he, when God had not yet been manifest in the flesh? How could he dream that the Lord God would condescend to be made flesh, and dwell among us, and show man His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—how could he dream that? And more than all, how could he dream that God, instead of throwing away our human nature when He rose again, as if it was too great a degradation for Him to be a man one moment more, should condescend to take up His human nature, His man's body, soul, and spirit, with Him into everlasting glory, that He might feed with it for ever the bodies and souls of those who trust in Him, so as to make them fit for us at the last day, to share in His everlasting life? The old heathen poet knew as well as you or I that there was an everlasting life beyond the grave; that men's souls were immortal, and could not die: but the thought of it was all dark, and dreary, and uncertain to him and to all mankind,

till the Son of God brought life and immortality to light, when He was manifest in the flesh.

Wonderful mystery of godliness! Wonderful love of God to man! Wonderful condescension of God to man! Still more wonderful patience of God to man!

Oh you who live still in sin, when the Son of God died and rose again to make you righteous; you who defile your bodies with sins worse than the brutes, when the Son of God offers to raise those bodies of yours to be equal with the angels; how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation; if you despise this unspeakable love; if you trample under foot, like swine, the everlasting glory and happiness which God offers you freely, without fee or price, for the sake of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who died to buy them for you?

XLIV.

THE WORK OF GOD'S SPIRIT.

If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me: of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.—JOHN xvi. 7—11.

I DO not pretend to be able to explain to you the whole meaning of this text, or even more than a very small part of it. For it speaks of God; of God the Holy Spirit. And God is boundless; and, therefore, every text which speaks of God is boundless too, as God is. No man can ever see the whole meaning of it, or do more than understand dimly a little of its truth. But what we can see, we must think over and make use of. What can we see, now, from this text? First, we may see that the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is a person. Not a mere thing, or a state of our own hearts, or a feeling in us, or a power, like the powers and laws by which the trees and plants grow, and the sun and moon move in their courses; but a person, just as each of us is a person. He, the Holy Spirit, gives life to trees and plants, sun and moon: but He is not their life. He gives them their life; and, therefore, that life of theirs is not He, or He could not give it; for you can only give something which is not you.

The Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit, not as it, but as He; as a person, and not as a thing; as a person who can speak to men's souls, guide and teach them. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself."

But we may see also that the Holy Spirit is neither God the Father, nor the Lord Jesus Christ. For the Lord speaks of Him, the Holy Spirit, as a different person either from Him or from the Father. "The Spirit," He says, "shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

But we may see also that there is no difference in will, or opinion, or love, between the Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son. For the Spirit does not speak of Himself; there is no self-will in Him. There is not one will of the Father, and another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost; or, one love of the Father, another love of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost; or, one righteousness of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost: or, one mercy and grace of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. For then there would be three Gods and three Lords; and the substance of God would be divided. But they have all one will, and one love, and one righteousness, and one mercy. And such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.

And remember always, that the Holy Spirit is very and indeed God. For He is the Spirit of holiness itself, of righteousness itself, of goodness itself, of love itself, of truth itself; and, therefore, He is the Spirit of God, who is the perfect holiness, and righteousness, and truth, and love. All other holiness, and righteousness, and truth, and love, are only pictures and patterns of God, just as the sun's reflection in water, or in a glass,

is a picture and pattern of the sun. As the Epistle for to-day tells us: "Every good gift and every perfect is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

But the Spirit of God must be God. For else what do the words mean? Is not the spirit of a man, a man? Is not your spirit, what you call your soul, you? Is not your soul you, just as much as your body is you; ay, a hundred times more? Just so, the Spirit of God is God, God Himself; and the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

This, then, is the glorious promise made to you, and to me, and to all who believe and are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that that Spirit will come to us, and take charge of our spirits, and work in them, and teach them. We cannot see Him with our eyes, or hear Him with our ears; we cannot even feel Him at work in our hearts and thoughts. For He is a Spirit; and His likeness, the thing in this world which is a pattern of Him, is the wind; as indeed the name Spirit means. You cannot see the wind, you cannot even really feel the wind or hear it: you only know it by its effects, by what it does: by the noise among the branches, the force against your faces, the bending boughs, and flying dust. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; even so is every one who is born of the Spirit. On him the Spirit of God will work unseen, and unfelt, only to be discovered by the change which He makes in the man's heart and thoughts; and first by the way in which He convinces him of sin, because men believe not on Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit shows men that the sins of the world, the sin of all sins, the sin which is the root of all other sins, is not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ; that it was because they would not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they had been falling into every other sort of sin.

But you may say: "How could they believe on Him before He came, and was born in Judæa of the Virgin Mary? How could they believe on Him when He was not there?" Ah! my friends, who told you that the Lord Jesus Christ was not there in the world all along? Not the Bible, certainly. For the Bible tells us that He is the Light who lights every man who cometh into the world; that from Him came, and have come, all the right thoughts and feelings which ever arose in the heart of every human being. The Bible tells us that when God created the world, He was daily rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men. The Bible tells us that He was in the world, and the world knew Him not; that all along, through the dark times of heathendom, the Lord Jesus Christ was a light shining in darkness, which the darkness could not close round, and hide and quench.

Not merely to the Jews, but to all heathens who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, did the Lord Jesus show something of His truth; as it is written, God is no acceptor of persons; that is, no shower of partiality, or unjust favour: but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.

But at the time that the Lord Jesus sent down His Holy Spirit, men were not working righteousness. There was not one who did good, no not one. For men had forgotten what righteousness was like, what a

righteous man ought to do and be. Men are ready to forget it every day. You and I are ready to forget it, and invent some false righteousness of our own, not like Jesus Christ, but like what we in our private fancies think is most graceful, or most agreeable, or most easy; or most grand, and far-fetched, and difficult. But the Holy Spirit came to convince men of righteousness; to show them what true righteousness was like.

And how? In the same way that He must convince us of righteousness, if we are ever to know what righteousness is, or are ever to be righteous ourselves. He must show us goodness; or we shall never see it, or receive it, or copy it.

And where is this righteousness, this perfect goodness of which the Holy Spirit will convince us? Where, but in the Lord Jesus Christ? In the Lord Jesus's character, the Lord Jesus's good works; His love, His patience, His perfect obedience, His life, His death. The Holy Spirit, if we give up our hearts to be taught by Him, will make us believe, and be sure, and feel in our very inmost hearts, how noble, how beautiful, how holy, how perfectly Godlike, was He who was born of a poor virgin, who walked this earth for thirty-three years in toil and sorrow, who gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hid not His face from shame and spitting, who died upon a cross between two thieves. And the Holy Spirit will convince us of righteousness, by making us feel what the Lord Jesus's righteousness consisted in; what was the root of all His goodness and holiness, namely His perfect obedience to His Father and our Father in heaven. That is the righteousness, which is not our own, but God's; the righteousness which comes by faith; not to trust in ourselves, but in

God; not to please ourselves, but God; not to do our own will, but God's will. That is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which God set His seal on and approved, when He exalted Him far above all principality and powers, and set Him at His own right hand for a sign to all men, and angels, and archangels; that righteousness means to trust and to obey God even to the death.

3. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

This may seem a puzzling speech at first. We shall understand it best, I think, by considering who the prince of this world was in our Lord's time, and what he was like. A little before our Lord's time the Roman emperor had conquered almost the whole world which was then known, and kept all nations in slavery, careless about their doing right, provided they obeyed him and paid him tribute; nay, forcing them and tempting them into all brutal and foul sin and ignorance, that he might keep up his own power over man.

But now the Lord of all the earth, and the Prince of men's hearts and thoughts, was come to visit that poor enslaved and sinful world. He came; the princes of this world knew Him not, and crucified the Lord of Glory. They crucified the righteous and the just One; and so they were judged. They judged themselves; they condemned themselves. For they showed that what they admired and what they wanted was not righteousness and love, but wealth and power. They showed that no doing of good, no healing of the sick, or giving of sight to the blind, or preaching the gospel to the poor, no holiness, no love, not the perfect likeness of God's own goodness, which shone forth in the spotless Jesus, was anything to them; was any reason why they should not put Him to death with the

most cruel torments, because they were afraid of His taking away their power. He said He was a King; and therefore they crucified Him, lest His kingdom should interfere with theirs; and for the same reason these same Roman emperors and their magistrates, for hundreds of years afterwards, persecuted the Christians, and hunted them down like wild beasts, and put them to death by all horrible tortures, for the same reason that Cain slew Abel; because his brother's deeds were righteous, and his own wicked.

So these Roman emperors, and their magistrates and generals were judged. They had shown what was in their evil hearts. They had been tried in God's balances, and found wanting. The sentence of the Lord God had gone forth against them. The man Christ Jesus, whom they rejected, God accepted, and raised to His own right hand. They crucified Him; but God gave Him all power in heaven and earth: and the Lord Jesus used His power; yea, and uses it still. He gave His saints and martyrs strength to defy those Roman tyrants, and to witness to all the earth that the righteous Son of God was the King of heaven and earth, and that the princes of this world, who wished to break His yoke off their necks, and crush all nations to powder for their own pleasure, and fatten themselves upon the plunder of all the earth, would surely come to naught, as it is written in the second Psalm: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and His Anointed. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

'And they did come to naught. That great Roman empire rotted away miserably after years of such

distress as had never been seen on the earth before; and the emperors came, one after another, to shameful or dreadful deaths. And all the while the gospel spread, and the Church grew, till all the kingdoms of the Roman empire had become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in men's hearts, and showing them, as our Lord said He would, that Jesus of Nazareth was both Lord and King. And so was fulfilled the Lord's words in the gospel for to-day: "The Holy Spirit shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He should take of mine, and show it unto you."

Oh my friends, pray for yourselves, and join me while I pray for you, that the holy and righteous Spirit of God may convince you, and me, and all mankind, more and more, day by day, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

Pray to that Holy Spirit to convince you of sin day by day, whensoever you do the least wrong thing. Pray to Him to keep your consciences tender and quick, that you may feel instantly, and lament deeply, every wrong thing you do.

Pray to Him to give you, every time you do wrong, that godly sorrow which brings peace and health, that heart-repentance never to be repented of. Pray to Him to convince you more and more, as you grow older, that all sin comes from not believing in Jesus Christ, not believing that He is near you, with you, in you, putting into your hearts all right thoughts and good desires, and willing, if you will, to help you to put those thoughts and desires into good practice.

Pray to the Holy Spirit to convince you more and more of righteousness; to make you see what

righteousness is; that it is the very character and likeness of God the Father, because it is the character and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. Pray to Him to make you see the beauty of holiness: how fair, and noble, and glorious a thing goodness is; how truly Solomon says: "that all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."

Pray to the Holy Spirit to convince you more and more of judgment, and to make you sure that the Lord is King, a righteous Judge, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, whose fan is in His hand, who thoroughly purges His floor, who comes quickly, and His reward is with Him, and who surely casts out of His kingdom, sooner or later, all things that offend, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Pray to Him to make you sure by faith, though you cannot see it, that the prince of this world is judged; that evil doing, oppression, tyranny, injustice, cheating, neglect of man by man, cannot and will not prosper upon the face of God's earth; for the everlasting sentence and wrath of God is revealed forth every moment against all unrighteousness of men, which He will surely punish, yea, and does hourly punish by Him by whom He judges the world, Jesus Christ, the Lord, who is exalted high above all principalities and powers, and has all power given to Him in heaven and earth, which He uses, as He used it in Judæa of old, utterly and always for the good of all mankind, whom He hath redeemed with His most precious blood.

XLV.

THE GOSPEL.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain: for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.—1 CORINTHIANS xv. 1–4.

THIS is St. Paul's account of the gospel; the good news which he preached to the sinful and profligate Corinthians, when they were sunk lower than the beasts which perish. And because they believed this good news, he said, they were saved then and there, and would be safe only as long as they believed that good news, and kept it in their memories. Now, from what did this good news save them? From their sins. There was something in St. Paul's good news which made them hate their sins, and repent of them, and throw them away, and rise up to be new men and women, living new lives in godliness and purity and justice, such as they had never lived before. Now mind, it was not bad news which made the Corinthians repent of their sins; it was good news. It was not that St. Paul told them that God was going to cast them into endless torment for their sins, and that therefore they were terrified and afraid, and so repented. Doubtless St. Paul told them, as he told

other heathens, that the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness; that tribulation and anguish was laid up in store for every soul of man who worketh evil. But still, St. Paul says plainly here, that what saved the Corinthians was not that or any other fearful and terrifying news, but a gospel—good news. And he says that this good news did not merely, as some would wish it to do, make them comfortable in their minds while they went on in their old wicked ways. No. He says that it made them stand. That is, made them upright, strong-minded, righteous, self-restraining people; and that they were saved by it from those sins which had been dragging them down, and keeping them diseased in soul, weak, miserable, the slaves of their own passions and foul pleasures.

What wonderful good news was this, then, which could work so strange a change in these poor heathens, and how could it change them?

Let us see, first, what it was.

"That Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that He was seen of Peter, then of the twelve; after that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remained unto this day, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

You see here, that St. Paul, for some good reason, says much more about the Lord's rising again than even about His most precious death and passion on the cross, while about His ascending into heaven he says nothing. And you will find in the New Testament

that the Apostles often did the same. They spoke of the Lord rising again as if that was the great wonder, the great glory, the great good news; and as if His most precious death was not perfect without that. They said that the especial office for which the Lord had ordained them, was to be witnesses of His resurrection. They said that the Lord rose again for our justification. They said: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here again, just as in the text, believing in the Lord's resurrection is made the great article of faith. Why is this? Because that last verse which I quoted may tell us, if we consider it carefully.

What does confessing the Lord Jesus with our mouth mean? It means what we ought to mean when we say, in the Apostles' Creed, I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. Not merely, I believe that there is an only Son of God: but I believe in a certain man, with a certain character, who is that only Son of God.

And what, you will ask, does that mean?

To know that, I fear, we must go back many many hundred years, to the times when the old martyrs confessed the Lord Jesus Christ before the heathen. Those were times in which it was not enough to say the Apostles' Creed in church. Men, ay, and tender women, and little children, had to stand by it through terror and shame, and to die in torments unspeakable, because they chose to say: "I believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord." Now, what was it which made the heathen hate and persecute and torture, and murder them for saying that? What was there in those plain words of the Apostles' Creed which made the great heathen emperors of Rome, and their

officers and judges hunt the Christians down like wild beasts for 300 years, and declare that they were not fit to live? I will tell you. When the Christians were brought before the emperor's judges for being Christians, they did not merely say: "I believe that Jesus Christ's blood will save my soul after death." They said that: but they said a great deal more than that. If that had been all that the Christians said, the judge would have answered: "What care I for your souls, or for your notions about what will happen to them when you are dead? Go your way. You may be of what religion you like, and talk and think about your own souls as much as you like, provided you do not trouble the Roman emperor's power." But the heathen judge did not make that answer; because he knew well enough that what the Christians believed was not a mere religion about what would happen to their souls after death; but something which, if it gained ground, would utterly destroy the Roman emperor's power. He used generally to say to the Christians only this: "Will you burn those few grains of incense in honour of the emperor of Rome?" And he knew, and the Christians knew well enough, that those words meant: "Will you confess with your mouth the emperor of Rome? Will you confess that he is the only lord and king of this whole earth, and of your bodies and souls, and that there is no power or authority but of him, for the gods have delivered all things into his hands?" And then came out what confessing the Lord Jesus really means. For the Christians used to answer: "No. The emperor of Rome is the lord and master of our bodies, and we will obey his laws so far as we can without doing wrong: but we cannot obey them when they are contrary to the laws of our Lord and Master Jesus

Christ. For the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified and rose again the third day, He, and not the emperor of Rome at all, is the Lord and King of the whole earth, and of our bodies and souls; and we must obey Him before we obey anyone else. Power and authority come not from the emperor of Rome, but from the Lord Jesus Christ; and the emperor is only His servant and steward, and must obey Him just as much as we, or the Lord will punish him as surely and easily as He will the meanest slave. For God has delivered all things, and the emperor of Rome among the rest, into the hand of His Son Jesus Christ, who sits a King over all, God blessed for ever." That was confessing Christ.

And to that the heathen judges used to make but one answer—for there was but one to make. Those heathen judges' guilty consciences, as well as their worldly cunning, told them plainly enough exactly what St. Paul told the Christians; that those Christians, by confessing Christ, were not fighting against flesh and blood, and setting up their selfish interests against other people's selfish interests: but that the battle they were fighting was a much deeper and more terrible one; that by saying that One who had walked the earth as a poor man, and yet a perfectly righteous and loving man, doing nothing but good, and sacrificing Himself utterly for poor fallen creatures, they were fighting against the whole state of things all over the world; against the government, and principles, and religion of that whole unjust and tyrannical Roman empire, and all its rulers, and generals, and judges; against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of the darkness of those times; against spiritual wickedness in heavenly things. For if Jesus Christ's life was the right life, those rulers must be utterly wrong; for it was exactly opposite to His.

If Jesus Christ was really the Governor of the earth, there was no hope for them; for their way of governing was exactly opposite to His. So as I say, they made but one answer; because there was but one to make: "You say that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. I say the emperor of Rome is. You say you must obey Christ first, and the emperor of Rome afterwards. I say that you must obey the emperor first, and Christ afterwards. At all events, if you do not, you have no right on this earth of the emperor's; either the emperor's power must fall, or your notion about Jesus Christ's power must. And we will see whether your heavenly King of whom you talk can deliver you out of the emperor's hand." And then came the scourge, and the red-hot iron, and the wild beasts, and the cross, and all devilish tortures which man's evil will could invent, brought to bear without shame or mercy upon aged men, and tender girls, and even little children, just to make them say that the earth belonged to the emperor, and not to Jesus Christ. Those who died bravely under those tortures without denying Christ were called martyrs, which means witnesses—people who bore witness before God and man that Jesus Christ was King and Lord. Those who did not die under the tortures, but escaped after all, were called confessors—people who had confessed with their mouths that Jesus Christ was King and Lord, in spite of their terror and agony. . . . That was what confessing Jesus Christ meant in the old times. And that was what it ought to mean now, even though there is no persecution or torture for Christians in these happier times.

And now, we may see perhaps why St. Paul spoke so much of our Lord's rising again as the most important part of the gospel.

Because he wanted Christians to believe, not merely

in a Christ who once died, but in Him who died and is alive for evermore; in a Christ who rose again, body, soul, and spirit, and sat at God's right hand, praying for poor creatures when they were tempted, and persecuted, and tormented for righteousness' sake. St. Paul knew well that such fearful times as those of which I have been speaking were coming on the people to whom he wrote. And he knew equally well that the only thought which could save them, when the heathen judges commanded them to deny the Lord Jesus, was the thought that He was really risen. The only thought which could make them bold enough to face all the horrors of death, was the thought that the Lord Jesus had not merely tasted death, but conquered it, and risen again from it. And therefore it is that St. Paul speaks so often of Christ's resurrection, and that in the text he takes so much pains to prove that Christ had really risen, by telling them how many persons, well known to him who wrote to them, had seen the Lord Jesus Christ after He rose, and talked with Him, and were sure that He was the very same person still, with the same countenance, and body, and soul, and spirit, as He had when He was nailed to the cross, and laid in the sepulchre.

What a thought for a poor creature in the last agony of fear and shame, expecting presently to be torn in pieces, or burnt alive: "Death, this horrible death, cannot conquer me, weak and fearful as I am; for my Lord and Master, for whom I am going to suffer, has conquered death, and He will not let it conquer me. He is stronger than death and hell, and He will not suffer me at my last hour for any pains of death to fall from Him. He is King of heaven and earth, and He will take care of His own!" What a comfortable thought to be able to say: "Ay, I am torn

from wife and child, and all which I love on earth. But not for ever, not for ever. For Christ rose from the dead. And I who belong to Christ, shall rise as He did. This poor flesh of mine may be burnt in flames, devoured by ravenous beasts. What matter? Christ the King of men, has risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. That same Spirit of His, which brought back His body from the grave and hell, will bring our bodies also from the grave and hell, to a nobler, happier life with Him in glory unspeakable. Christ is risen, and I shall rise with Him at the last day. Christ sits at God's right hand, watching me, pitying me, and blessing me, holding out to me a crown of glory which shall never fade away!" That was the thought which gave Stephen courage to confess the Lord Jesus Christ, and to die in peace amid the murderous blows of the Jews. For by faith he saw, as he said, the heavens opened, and Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. He knew that his Lord was risen, and that He would hear his dying cry: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

And so with us, my friends; we have no martyrdom to go through, thank God; but it is just as true of us as it was of the blessed martyrs and confessors, that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved but the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saved; not only from hell, but from sin, from giving way to temptation, from denying Christ. Oh, pray for faith. Pray for faith. Pray to be able really to confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus. Pray to believe with your hearts that God has raised Him from the dead. Then when you are tempted to do wrong, you, like Stephen, will see, not with your bodily eyes, but by faith, the Lord Jesus sitting at God's right hand, and be able to say to Him: "Lord Jesus, who

hast conquered all temptation, help me to conquer this. Thine eye is on me; how can I do this great wickedness and sin against Thee?" When you are in terror, and trouble, and affliction, and know not where to turn, that same blessed thought—"Christ is risen from the dead"—will be a shield and a strength to you which no other thought can give. "My Lord is risen; He is here still—a man, with His man's body, and His man's spirit—His man's love and tenderness; He has taken them all up to heaven with Him. He is a man still, though He is very God of very God. He rose from the dead as a man, and therefore He can understand me, and feel for me still, now, here in England in this very year, 1852, just as much as He could when He was walking upon earth in Judæa of old."

Ay, and in the black jaws of death, when this world is vanishing from our eyes, and we are going we know not whither, leaving behind us all we know, and love, and understand; then that thought of all thoughts —"Christ is risen from the dead"—is the only one which will save us from dark sad thoughts, from fear and despair, or from stupid carelessness, and the death of a brute beast, such as too many die. "Christ is risen and I shall rise. Christ has conquered death for Himself, and He will conquer it for me. Christ took His man's body and soul with Him from the tomb to God's right hand, and He will raise my man's body and soul at the last day, that I may be with Him for ever, and see Him where He is." In life and in death this is the only thing which shall save us from sin, from terror, and from the dread of death; the same good news which St. Paul preached to the Corinthians; the same good news which made St. Stephen, and the martyrs and confessors of old brave to endure all misery for the sake of the good and blessed news, that God had raised His Son Jesus from the dead.

XLVI.

GOD'S WAY WITH MAN.

And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God.—EZEKIEL xx. 44.

IN this chapter the prophet Ezekiel argues with his sinful and rebellious countrymen, and puts them in mind of all that God has done for them and with them, from the time when He brought them out of Egypt to that day.

And now comes the old question, What has this to do with us! St. Paul tells us that all things which happened to the old Jews happened for our example. What example can we learn from this chapter?

This, I think, we may learn: Is not the way in which God taught these Jews the same way in which He teaches many a man—perhaps every man? Which of us, when we were young, has not had his teaching from God? The old Catechism which our mothers taught us, was not that a word from God Himself to us? The voice of conscience, which made us happy when we had done right, and uneasy and ashamed when we had gone wrong; was not that a word from God to us? Yes, my friends, those child's feelings of ours about right and wrong, were none other than the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the Light which lightens every man who comes into the world. I tell you, every right thought and wish, every

longing to be better than you were, which ever came into any one of your hearts, came from Him, the Lord Jesus. It was His word, His voice, His Spirit, speaking to your spirit, just as really as He spoke to His prophet Ezekiel, of whom we have been reading. Think of that. Recollect, never, never forget, that all your good thoughts and feelings are not your own, not your own at all, but the Lord's; that without His light your hearts are nothing but darkness, blind ignorance, and blind selfishness, and blind passions and lusts; that it is He, he Himself, who has been fighting against the darkness in you all your life long. Oh think, then, what your sin has been in putting aside those good thoughts and longings! You were turning your back, you were shutting your doors to the Lord God Himself, very God of very God-begotten, by whom all things were made. The Creator came to visit His creature, and His creature shut Him out. The Almighty God pleaded with mortal man, and mortal man bade God go, and come back at a more convenient season! A voice in your heart seemed to say: "Oh, if I could but be a better man! How I wish that I could but give up these bad habits, and mend! I hate and despise myself for being so bad." And then you fancied that that voice was your own voice, that those good thoughts were your own thoughts. If you had really known whose they were; if you had really known, as the Bible tells you, that they were the Word of the Lord, the only-begotten Son of the Father, speaking to your heart, I hardly think that you would have been so ready to say yourself: "Well, then, I will mend; but not just now: some day or other; somehow or other, I hope, I shall be a better man. It will be time enough to make my peace with God when I am growing old." You would not have dared to thrust

away the good thoughts, and keep them waiting, while you took your pleasure in a few more years' sin; if you had guessed *whom* you were thrusting away; if you had guessed *whom* you were keeping waiting.

And, my good friends, has not God been saying to us many a time from our youth up, as He did to the Jews of old: "Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor defile yourselves with their idols?" Do you ask me how? Why, thus. Have you never said to yourself: "How ill my father prospered, because he would do wrong!" Or, again: "See how evil doing brings its own punishment. There is so and so growing rich, by his cheating and his covetousness, and yet, for all his money, I would not change places with him. God forbid that I should have on my mind what he has on his mind!" Why should I make a long story of so simple a matter? Which of us has not felt at times that thought? How much misery has come in this very parish from the ill-doing of the generation who are gone to their account, and from the ill-training which they gave their children?

And what was that but the Word of the Lord Himself speaking to our hearts, and saying to us: "Do not defile yourselves with their idols; do not hurt your souls by hunting after the things which they loved better than they loved Me: money, pleasure, drink, fighting, smuggling, poaching, wantonness, and lust; I am the Lord your God?"

And yet, young people will not listen to that warning voice of God. They see other people, even their own fathers and mothers, punished for their sins; perhaps made poor by their sins, perhaps made unhealthy by their sins, perhaps made miserable and ill-tempered by their sins: and yet they go and fall into, or rather walk open-eyed into, the very same sins

which made their parents wretched. Oh, how many a young person sees their home made a complete hell on earth by ungodliness, and the ill-temper and selfishness which come from ungodliness; and, then, as soon as they have a home of their own, set to work to make their own family as miserable as their father's was before them.

But people say often: "How could we help it? We had no chance; we were brought up in bad ways; we had a bad example set us; how can you expect us to be better than our fathers and mothers, and our elder brothers and sisters? If we had had a fair chance, we might have been different: but we had none; and we could not help going the bad way, for we were set in it the day we were born."

Well, my dear friends, God shall judge you, not I. If little is given to a man little is required of him. But not nothing at all; because more than nothing was given him. A little is given to every man; and, therefore, a little is required of every man. And so, he who knew not his Master's will shall be beaten with few stripes. But he will be beaten with some stripes, because he ought to have known something, at least of his Master's will. If you were dumb animals, which can only follow their own lusts and passions, and must be what nature has made them, then your excuse would be good enough; but your excuse is not good now, just because you are men and women, and not dumb beasts, and, therefore, can rise above your natures, and conquer your lusts and passions, as they cannot, and can do what you do not like, because, though you dislike it, you know that it is right. And, therefore, God does not take that excuse which sinners make, that they have had no teaching. But what does he do to them?

Suppose, now, that you had a dog which would not be taught, or broken in, or cured of biting, or made useful, or bearable in any way, what would you do to that dog? I suppose that you would kill it; you would say: "It is an ill-conditioned animal, and there is no making it any better; so the only thing is to put it out of the way, and not let it eat food which might be better spent." Now, does God deal so with sinners? When young people rush headlong into sin, and become a nuisance to themselves and their neighbours, does God kill them at once, that better men may step into their place? No. And why? Just because they are not dumb animals, which cannot be made better, but God's children, who can be made better. If there were really no hope of a sinner repenting and amending, I think God would not leave him long alive to cumber the ground. But there is hope for every one; because God the Father loves all; the loving heart of the Lord Jesus Christ yearns after all; the Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, strives with the hearts of all; therefore God, in His patience and tender mercy, tries to bring his foolish children to their senses. And how? Often in the very same way in which Ezekiel says He tried to bring the Jews to their senses, by letting them go on in the road of sin, till they see what an ugly pit that same road ends in. If your child would not believe you when you warned and assured him that the fire would burn him, would it not be the very best way of bringing him to his senses, to tell him: "Very well; go your own way; put your hand into the fire, and see what comes of it; you will not believe me; you will believe your own feelings, when your hand is burnt." So did the Lord to those rebellious Jews when they would go after their fathers'

sins. He gave them statutes which were not good, and judgments by which they could not live, to the end that they might know that He was the Lord. God did not make them commit any sins. God forbid! He only took away His Spirit, His light and teaching, from them, and let them go on in the light of their own foolish and bewildered hearts, till their sin bred misery and shame to them, and they were filled with the fruit of their own devices. Then, after all their wealth was gone, and their land was wasted by cruel enemies, and they themselves were carried away captive into Babylon, they began to awake, and say to themselves: "We were wrong after all, and the Lord was right. He knew what was really good for us better than we did. We thought that we could do without Him, disobey Him. But He is the Lord after all. He has been too strong for us; He has punished us. If we had listened to His warnings years ago, we might have been saved all this misery."

Ah, how many a poor foolish creature, in misery and shame, with a guilty conscience and a sad heart, sits down, like the prodigal son, among the swinish bad company into which his sins have brought him, longing to fill his belly with the husks which the swine eat! but he cannot. He tries to forget his sorrow by drinking, by bad company, by gambling, by gossiping, like the fools around him: but he cannot. He finds no more pleasure in sin. He is sick and tired of it. He has had enough of it and too much. He is miserable, and he hardly knows why. But miserable he is. There is a longing, and craving, and hunger at his heart after something better; at least after something different. Then he begins to remember his heavenly Father's house. Old words which he learnt at his mother's knee, good old words out of his

Catechism and his Bible, start up strangely in his mind. He had forgotten them, laughed at them, perhaps, in his wild days. But now they come up, he does not know where from, like beautiful ghosts gliding in. And he is ashamed of them; they reproach him, the dear old lessons; and yet they seem pleasant to him, though they make him blush. And at last he says to himself: "Would God that I were a little child again; once more an innocent little child at my mother's knee! I thought myself clever and cunning. I thought I could go my own way and enjoy myself. But I cannot. Perhaps I have been a fool; and the old Sunday books were right after all. At least I am miserable. I thought I was my own master. But perhaps He about whom I used to read in the Sunday books is my Master after all. At least I am not my own master; I am a slave. Perhaps I have been fighting against Him, against the Lord God, all this time, and now He has shown me that He is the stronger of the two. . . . And so the poor man learns in trouble and shame to know, like the Jews of old, who is the Lord.

And when the Lord has drawn a man thus far, does He stop? Not so. He does not leave His work half done. If the work is half done, it is that we stop, not that He stops. Whosoever comes to Him, howsoever confusedly, or clumsily, or even lazily they may come, He will in no wise cast out. He may afflict them still more to cure that confusion and laziness; but He is a physician who never sends a willing patient away, or keeps him waiting for a single hour.

How then does the Lord deal with such a man? Does He drive him further? Not if he will go without being driven. You would call it cruel to drive a beast on with blows, when it was willing to be led

peaceably. And be sure God is not more cruel than man. As soon as we are willing to be led, He will take His rod off from us, and lead us tenderly enough. For I have known God do this to a man, and a sinful man as ever trod this earth. I have known such a man brought into utter misery and shame of heart, and heavy affliction in outward matters, till his spirit was utterly broken, and he was ready to say: "I am a beast and a fool. I am not worth the bread I eat. Let me lie down and die." And then, when the Lord had driven that man so far, I have seen, I who speak to you now, how the Lord turned and looked on that man as he turned and looked on Peter, and brought his poor soul to life again, as He brought Peter's, by a loving smile, and not an angry frown. I have seen the Lord heap that man with all manner of unexpected blessings, and pay him back sevenfold for all his affliction, and raise him up, body and soul, and satisfy him with good things, so that his youth was renewed like the eagle's. And so the man's conversion to God, though it was begun by God's chastisements and afflictions, was brought to perfection by God's mercy and bounty; and it happened to that man, as Ezekiel prophesied that it would happen to the Jews, that not fear and dread, but honour, gratitude, and that noble shame of which no man need be ashamed, brought him home to God at last. "And you shall remember your ways, and all your doings wherein ye have been defiled: and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evils which you have committed. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, saith the Lord God."

You see that God's mercy to them would not make

them conceited or careless. It would increase their shame and confusion when they found out what sort of a Lord He was against whom they had been rebellious; long-suffering and of tender mercy, returning good for evil to His disobedient children. That feeling would awake in them more shame and more confusion than ever: but it would be a noble shame, a happy confusion, and tears of joy and gratitude, not of bitterness. Such a shame, such a confusion, such tears, as the blessed Magdalene's when she knelt at the Lord's feet, and found that, instead of hating her and thrusting her away for all her sins, He told her to go in peace, pardoned and happy. Then she knew the Lord; she found out His character—His name; for she found out that His name was love. Oh, my friends, this is the great secret; the only knowledge worth living for, because it is the only knowledge which will enable you to live worthily—to know the Lord. That knowledge will enable you to live a life which will last, and grow, and prosper for ever, beyond the grave, and death, and judgment, and eternities of eternities. As the Lord Himself said, when He was upon earth, "This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Therefore there is no use my warning you against sin, and telling you, do not do this, and do not do that, unless I tell you at the same time who is the Lord. For till you know that The Good God is the Lord, you will have no real, sound, heartfelt reason for giving up your sins; and what is more, you will not be able to give them up. You may alter your sort of sins from fear of this and that; but the root of sin will be there still; and if it cannot bear one sort of fruit it will bear another. If you dare not drink or riot, you may become covetous and griping; if you dare

not give way to young men's sins, you will take to old men's sins instead; if you dare not commit open sins you will commit secret ones in your thoughts. Sin is much too stout a plant to be kept from bearing some sort of fruit. As long as it is not rooted up the root will breed death in you of some sort or other; and the only feeling which can root up sin is to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is your Lord, and that your Lord condescended to die upon the cross for you; that you must be the Lord's, and are not your own, but bought with the price of His most precious blood, that you may glorify God with your body and your soul, which are His.

Just so, the blessed St. Augustine found that he could never conquer his own sins by arguing with himself, or by any other means, till he got to know God, and to see that God was the Lord. And when his spirit was utterly broken; when he saw himself, in spite of all his wonderful cleverness and learning, to have been a fool and blind all along, though people round him were flattering him, and running after him to hear his learning; then the old words which he learnt at his mother's knee came up in his mind, and he knew that God was the Lord after all, and that God had been watching him, guiding him, letting him go wrong only to show him the folly of going wrong, caring for him even when He left him to himself and his sins, and the sad ways of his sins; bearing with him, pleading with his conscience, alluring him back to the only true happiness, as a loving father with a rebellious and self-willed child. And then, when St. Augustine had found out at last that God was his Lord, who had been taking the charge of him all through his heathen youth, he became a changed man. He was able to conquer his sins; for God conquered

them for him. He was able to give up the profligate life which he had been leading; not from fear of punishment, but from the Spirit of God—the spirit of gratitude, honour, trust, and love toward God, which made him abide in God, and God abide in him. To that blessed state may God of His great mercy bring us all. To it He will bring us all unless we rebel and set up our foolish and selfish will against His loving and wise will. And if He does bring us to it, it is little matter whether He brings us to it through joy or through sorrow, through honour or through shame, through the garden of Eden, or through the valley of the shadow of death. For, my dear friends, what matter how bitter the medicine is, if it does but save our lives?

XLVII.

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage.—JOHN ii. 1, 2.

IT is, I think, in the first place, an important, as well as a pleasant thing, to know that the Lord's glory, as St. Paul says, was first shown forth at a wedding, at a feast. Not at a time of sorrow, but of joy. Not about some strange affliction or disease, such as is the lot of very few, but about a marriage, that which happens in the ordinary lot of all mankind. Not in any fearful judgment or destruction of sinners, but in blessing wedlock, by which, whether among saints or sinners, mankind is increased. Not by helping some great philosopher to think more deeply, or some great saint to perform more wonderful acts of holiness, but in giving the simple pleasure of wine to simple commonplace people, of whom we neither read that they were rich or righteous. We do not even read whether the master of the feast ever found out that Jesus had worked a miracle, or whether any of the company ever believed in Him, on the strength of that miracle, except His mother and the disciples, and the servants, who were probably the poor slaves of people in a low or middling class of life. But that is the way of the Lord. He is no respecter of persons. Rich and poor are alike in

His sight; and the poor need Him most, and therefore He began his work with the poor in Cana, as He did in St. James's time, when the poor of this world were rich in faith, and the rich of this world were oppressors and taskmasters. So He does in every age. Though no one else cares for the poor, He cares for them: With their hearts He begins His work, even as He did in England sixty years ago, by the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley. Do you wish to know if anything is the Lord's work? See if it is a work among the poor. Do you wish to know whether any preaching is the true gospel of the Lord? See whether it is a gospel, a good news to the poor. I know no other test than that. By doing that, by preaching the gospel to the poor, by working miracles for the poor, He has showed forth His glory, and proved Himself the true, and just, and loving Lord of all.

But again, the Lord is a giver, and not a taskmaster. He does not demand from us: He gives to us. He had been giving from the foundation of the world. Corn and wine, rain and sunshine, and fruitful seasons had been his sending. And now He was come to show it. He was come to show men who it was who had been filling their heart with joy and gladness; who had been bringing out of the earth and air, by His unseen chemistry, the wine which maketh glad the heart of man. In every grape that hangs upon the vine, water is changed into wine, as the sap ripens into rich juice. He had been doing that all along in every vineyard and orchard; and that was His glory. Now He was come to prove that; to draw back the veil of custom and carnal sense, and manifest Himself. Men had seen the grapes ripen on the tree; and they were tempted to say, as every one of us is tempted now: "It is the sun and the air, the nature of the vine, and the nature of the

climate, which makes the wine." Jesus comes and answers: "Not so. I make the wine; I have been making it all along. The vines, the sun, the weather, are only my tools wherewith I worked, turning rain and sap into wine; and I am greater than they; I made them; I do not depend on them; I can make wine from water without vines or sunshine. Behold, and drink, and see my glory *without* the vineyard, since you had forgotten how to see it *in* the vineyard! For I am now, even as I was in Paradise, The Word of the Lord God; and now, even as in Paradise, I walk among the trees of the garden, and they know me and obey me, though the world knows me not. I have been all along in the world, and the world knows me not. Know me now, lest you lose the knowledge of me for ever!"

Those of the Jews who received that message, as the disciples did, found out their ancient Lord, and clung to Him, and know now, in the world of spirits, that His message was indeed a true one. Those who did not, lost sight of Him; to this day their eyes are blinded; to this day they have utterly forgotten that they have a Lord and Ruler, who is the Word and Son of God. Their faith is no more like the faith of David than their understanding of the Scriptures is like his. The Bible is a dead letter to them. The kingdom and government of God is forgotten by them. Of all God-worshipping people in the world, the Jews are the least godly, the most given up to the worship of this world, and the things which they can see, and taste, and handle, and, therefore, to covetousness, cheating, lying, tyranny, and all the sins which spring from forgetting that this world belongs to the Lord and that He rules and guides it, that its blessings are His gifts, and we His stewards, to use them for the good of all. May God help, and forgive, and convert

them! Doubt not that He will do so in His good time. But let us beware, my friends, lest we fall into the same sin. Do not fancy that we are not in just the same danger. It would be a cowardly thing of a preacher to call Jews, or heathens, or any other absent persons hard names, unless their mistakes and their sins were such as his own people wanted warnings against, ay, perhaps, had the very root of them in their hearts already. And we have the root of the Jews' sin in our own hearts. Why is this one miracle read in our churches to this day, if we do not stand just as much in need of the lesson as those for whom it was first worked? We, as well as they, are in danger of forgetting who it is that sends us corn and wine, and fruitful seasons, love and marriage, and all the blessings of this life. We, as well as the Jews, are continually fancying that these outward earthly things, as we call them in our shallow carnal conceits, have nothing to do with Jesus or His kingdom, but that we may compete, and scrape, even cheat and lie to get them, and when we have them, misuse them selfishly, as if they belonged to no one but ourselves, as if we had no duty to perform about them, as if we owed God no service for them.

And again, we are, just as much as the Jews were, in danger of spiritual pride; in danger of fancying that because we are religious, and have, or fancy we have, deep experiences and beautiful thoughts about God and Christ and our own souls, therefore we can afford to despise those who do not know as much as ourselves; to despise the common pleasures and petty sorrows of poor creatures, whose souls and bodies are grovelling in the dust, busied with the cares of this world, at their wits' end to get their daily bread; to despise the merriment of young people, the play of

children, and all those everyday happinesses which, though we may turn from them with a sneer, are precious in the sight of Him who made heaven and earth. All such proud thoughts, all such contempt of those who do not seem as spiritual as we fancy ourselves, is evil. It is from the devil, and not from God. It is the same vile spirit which made the Pharisees of old say: "This people—these poor worldly drudging wretches—who know not the law, are accursed." And mind, this is not a sin of rich, and learned, and high-born men only. They may be more tempted to it than others; but poor men, when they become, by the grace of God, wiser, more spiritual, more holy than others, are tempted, just as much as the rich, to despise their poor neighbours to whom God has not given the same light as themselves; and surely in them it shows ugliest of all. A learned and high-born man may be excused for looking down upon the sinful poor, because he does not understand their temptations, because he never has been ignorant and struggling as they are. But a poor man who despises the poor—he has no excuse. He ought above all men to feel for them, for he has been tempted even as they are. He knows their sorrows; he has been through their dark valley of bad food, bad lodging, want of work, want of teaching, low cares which drag the soul to earth. Surely a poor man who has tasted God's love and Christ's light, ought, above all others, instead of turning his back on his class, to pity them, to make common cause with them, to teach them, guide them, comfort them, in a way no rich man can. Yes; after all, it is the poor must help the poor; the poor must comfort the poor; the poor must teach and convert the poor.

See, in the epistle for this day, St. Paul makes no

distinction between rich and poor. This epistle is joined with the gospel for the day, to show us what ought to be the conduct of Christians, who believe in the miracle of Cana; what men should do who believe that they have a Lord in heaven, by whose command suns shine, fruits ripen, men enjoy the blessings of harvest, of marriage, of the comforts which the heathen and the savage, as well as the Christian man, partake; what men should do who believe that they have a Lord in heaven who entered into the common joys and sorrows of lowly men, who was once Himself a poor villager, who ate with publicans and sinners, who condescended to join in a wedding feast, and increase the mere animal enjoyment of the guests. And what is St. Paul's command to poor as well as rich? Read the epistle for this day and see.

You see at once that this epistle is written in the same spirit as our Lord's words: by God's Spirit, in short; the Spirit which brought the Lord Jesus so condescendingly to the wedding feast; the Spirit which made Him care so heartily for the common pleasures of those around Him. My friends, these are not commands to one class, but to all. Poor as well as rich may show mercy with cheerfulness, and love without dissimulation. Poor as well as rich may minister to others with earnestness, and condescend to those of low estate. Not a word in this whole epistle which does not apply equally to every rank, and sex, and age.

Neither are these commands to each of us by ourselves, but to all of us together, as members of a family. If you will look through them they are not things to be done to ourselves, but to our neighbours; not experiences to be felt about our own souls: but rules of conduct to our fellow-men. They are all

different branches and flowers from that one roof: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Do we live thus, rich or poor? Can we look each other in the face this afternoon and say, each man to his neighbour: "I have behaved like a brother to you. I have rejoiced at your good fortune, and grieved at your sorrow. I have preferred you to myself. I have loved you without dissimulation. I have been earnest in my place and duty in the parish for the sake of the common good of all. I have condescended to those of lower rank than myself. I have——" Ah, my dear friends, I had better not go on with the list. God forgive us all! The less we try to justify ourselves on this score the better. Some of us do indeed try to behave like brothers and sisters to their neighbours; but how few of us; and those few how little! And yet we are brothers. We are members of one family, sons of one Father, joint-heirs with one Lord, the poor Man who sat eating and drinking at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, and mixed freely in the joys and the sorrows of the poorest and meanest. Joint-heirs with Christ; yet how unlike Him! My friends, we need to repent and amend our ways; we need to confess, every one of us, rich and poor, the pride, the selfishness, the carelessness about each other, which keeps us so much apart, knowing so little of each other, feeling so little for each other. Oh confess this sin to God, every one of you. Those who have behaved most like brothers, will be most ready to confess how little they have behaved like brothers. Confess: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, for I have not loved, cared for, helped my brothers and sisters round, who are just as much thy children as I am." Pray for the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of

condescension, love, fellow-feeling; that spirit which rejoices simply and heartily with those who are happy, and feels for another's sorrows as if they were its own. Pray for it; for till it comes, there will be no peace on earth. Pray for it; for when it comes and takes possession of your hearts, and you all really love and live like brothers, children of one Father, the kingdom of God will be come indeed, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

XLVIII.

PARABLE OF THE LOWEST PLACE.

And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—LUKE xiv. 7–11.

WE heard in the gospel for to-day how the Lord Jesus put forth a parable to those who were invited to a dinner with Him at the Pharisee's house. A parable means an example of any rules or laws; a story about some rule, by hearing which people may see how the rule works in practice, and understand it. Now, our Lord's parables were about the kingdom of God. They were examples of the rules and laws by which the kingdom of God is governed and carried on. Therefore He begins many of His parables by saying, The kingdom of God is like something—something which people see daily, and understand more or less. "The kingdom of God is like a field;" "The kingdom of God is like a net;" "The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed;" and so forth.

And even where He did not begin one of His parables by speaking of the kingdom of God, we may be still certain that it has to do with the kingdom of God. For the one great reason why the Lord was made flesh and dwelt among us, was to preach the kingdom of God, His Father and our Father, and to prove to men that God was their King, even at the price of his most precious blood. And, therefore, everything which He ever did, and everything which He ever spoke, had to do with this one great work of His. This parable, therefore, which you heard read in the gospel for to-day, has to do with the kingdom of God, and is an example of the laws of it.

Now, what is the kingdom of God? It is worth our while to consider. For at baptism we were declared members of the kingdom of God; we were to renounce the world, and to live according to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is simply the way in which God governs men; and the world is the way in which men try to manage without God's help or leave. That is the difference between them; and a most awful difference it is. Men fancy that they can get on well enough without God; that the ways of the world are very reasonable, and useful, and profitable, and quite good enough to live by, if not to die by. But all the while God is King, let them fancy what they like; and this earth, and everything on it, from the king on his throne to the gnat in the sunbeam, is under His government, and must obey His laws or die. We are in God's kingdom, my good friends, every one of us, whether we like it or not, and we shall be there for ever and ever. And our business is, therefore, simply to find out what are the laws of that kingdom, and obey those

laws as speedily as possible, and live for ever thereby, lest, if we break them, and get in their way, they should grind us to powder.

Now, here is one of the laws of God's kingdom: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and whosoever abaseth himself shall be exalted." That is, whosoever, in any way whatsoever, sets himself up, will be pulled down again: while he who is contented to keep low, and think little of himself, will be raised up and set on high. Now the world's rule is the exact opposite of this. The world says, Every man for himself. The way of the world is to struggle and strive for the highest place; to be a pushing man, and a rising man, and a man who will stand stiffly by his rights, and give his enemy as good as he brings, and beat his neighbour out of the market, and show off himself to the best advantage, and try to make the most of whatever wit or money he has to look well in the world, that people may look up to him and flatter him and obey him; and so the world has no objection to people's pretending to be better than they are: Every man must do the best he can for himself, the world says, and never mind his neighbours: they must take care of themselves; and if they are foolish enough to be taken in, so much the worse for them. So the world thinks that there is no harm in a man, when he has anything to sell, making it out better than it really is, and hiding the fault in it as far as he can. When a tradesman or manufacturer sends about "puffs" of his goods, and pretends that they are better and cheaper than other people's, just to get custom by it, the world does not call that what it is—boasting and lying. It says: "Of course a man must do the best he can for himself. If a man does not praise himself, nobody else will

praise him; he cannot expect his neighbours to take him for better than his own words." So again, if a man wants a place or situation, the world thinks it no harm if he gives the most showy character of himself, and gets his friends to say all the good of him they can, and a great deal more, and to say none of the harm—in short, to make himself out a much better, or shrewder, or worthier man than he really is. The world does not call that either what it is—boasting, and lying, and thrusting oneself into callings to which God has not called us. The world says: "Of course a man must turn his best side outwards. You cannot expect a man to tell tales on himself."

And, my friends, the world would be quite right, and reasonable, and prudent, in telling us to push, and boast, and lie, and puff ourselves and our goods, if it were not for one thing which the foolish blind world is always forgetting, and that is, that there is a God who judges the earth. If God were not our King; if He took no care of us men and our doings; if mankind had it all their own way on earth, and were forced to shift for themselves without any laws of God to guide them, then the best thing every man could do would be to fight for himself; to get all he could for himself, and leave as little as he could for his neighbours; to make himself out as great, and wise, and strong, as he could, and try to make his neighbours buy him at his own price. That would be the best plan for every man, if God was not King; and therefore the world says that that is the best plan for every man, because the world does not believe that God is King, and hates the notion that God is King, and laughs at and persecutes, as Jesus Christ said it would, those who preach the kingdom of God, and tell men, as I tell you in God's name: "You were not

made to be selfish; you were not meant to rise in the world by boasting and pushing down and deceiving your neighbours. For you are subjects of God's kingdom; and to do so is to break his laws, and to put yourselves under His curse; and however worldly-wise all this selfishness and boasting may seem, it is sin, whose wages are death and ruin."

For, my friends, let the world try to forget God as it will, He does not forget the world. Let men try to make rules and laws for themselves, rules about religion, rules about government, rules about trade, rules about morals and what they fancy is just and fair; let them make as many rules as they like, they are only wasting their time; for God has made His rules already, and revealed them to us in the Bible, and told us that the earth and mankind are governed in His way, and not in ours, and that He will not alter His everlasting rules to suit our new ones. As David says: "Let the people be never so unquiet, still the Lord is King."

Ah, my friends, it is very easy to say all this, but it is not so easy to believe it. Every one, every respectable person at least, is ready enough to talk about God, and God's will, and so forth. But when it comes to practice; when it comes to doing God's will, and not our own; when it comes to obeying His direct and plain commands, and not the fashions and maxims which men have invented for themselves; when it comes to giving up what we long for, because He has said that if we try after it in our own way, and not in His, we shall never have it at all, then comes the trial; then comes the time to see whether we believe that God is the King of the earth or not; then comes the time to see whether we have renounced the world, and determined to live as God's sons in God's kingdom, or whether our religion is some form of words, or way of

thinking and feeling which we hope may save our souls from hell, but which has nothing to do with our daily life and conduct, and leaves us just as worldly as any heathen, in all our dealings with our fellow-men, from Monday morning to Saturday night. Then comes the time to try our faith in God.

And then, alas! it comes out, in these evil, and godless, and hypocritical times in which we live, that many a man who fancies himself religious, and respectable, and blameless, and what not, no more really believes that he is living in God's kingdom than the heathen do. And if you ask him, you will find out most probably that he fancies that God's kingdom is not on earth now, but that it will be on earth some day. A cunning delusion of the devil, that, my friends! To make us go his way while we fancy that we are going our own way. To make us say to ourselves: "'Ah! it is very unfortunate that God is not King of the earth now. Of course He will be after the resurrection, in the new heaven and the new earth, where there will be no sin. But He is not King now; this world is given over to sin and the devil, so fallen and ruined and corrupt that—that—that, in short, we cannot be expected to behave like God's children in it, but must just follow the ways of the world, and live by ambition, and selfishness, and cunning, and boasting, and competing in this life; a life of love, and justice, and humbleness, and fellow-help, and mercy, and self-sacrifice is impossible in such a world as this; we cannot live like angels, till we get to heaven!" So say nine people out of ten; the devil deceiving them, and their own hearts, alas! being but too glad to catch at the excuse for sin which the devil gives them, when he tells them that this present earth is not God's kingdom; and so they go and act

accordingly, selfish, grudging, pushing, boastful, every man's hand against his neighbour and for himself, till they succeed too often in making this earth as fearfully like the devil's kingdom as it is possible for God's kingdom to be made.

But what, some may ask, has all this to do with the text that he who sets himself up shall be brought low, he who keeps himself low shall be set up? What has it to do with the text? It has everything to do with the text. If people really believed that they were God's subjects and children in God's kingdom, they would not need to ask that question long.

If God is really the King of the earth, there can be no use in anyone setting up himself. If God is really the King of the earth, those who set up themselves must be certain to be brought down from their high thoughts and high assumptions sooner or later. For if God is really the King of the earth, He must be the one to set people up, and not they themselves. Look again at the parable. The man who asks the guests to dine with him has surely a right to place each of them where he likes. The house is his, the dinner is his. He has a right to invite whom he likes; and he has a right to settle where they shall sit. If they choose their own places—if any guest takes upon himself to seat himself at the head of the table, because he thinks it his right, he offends against all rules of right feeling and propriety toward the man who has invited him. All he has a right to expect is, that his host will not put him in the wrong place, that he will settle all places at his table according to people's real rank and deserts, and as our Testaments say, put "the worthiest man in the highest room." And if people really believed in God, which very few do, they would surely expect no less of God. What gentleman, farmer, or labourer is

there, with common sense and good feeling, who would not show most respect to the most respectable persons who came into his house, and send his best and trustiest workmen about his most important errands? True, he might make mistakes, and worse. Being a weak man, he might be tempted to put the rich sinner in a higher place than the poor saint: or he might, from private fancy, be blinded about his workmen's characters, and so send a worse man, because he was his favourite, to do what another man whom he did not fancy as well might do a great deal better. But you cannot suspect God of that. He is no respecter of persons—whether a man be rich or poor, no matter to God: all which He inquires into is—Is he righteous or unrighteous, wise or foolish, able to do his work or unable? And God can make no mistakes about people's characters. As St. Paul says of the Lord Jesus: "The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing through to the dividing of the very joints and marrow, so that all things are naked and open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do." There is no blinding God, no hiding from God, no cheating God, just as there is no flattering God. He knows what each and every one of us is fit for. He knows what each and every one of us is worth; and what is more, He knows what we ought to know, that each and every one of us is worth nothing without Him. Therefore there is no use pretending to be better than we are. God knows just how good we are, and will reward us, even in this life only according as we deserve, in spite of all our boasting. There is no use pretending to be wiser than we are. For all the wisdom we have comes from God; and if we pretend to have more than we have, and by that greatest act of folly, show that we have no wisdom at all, He will

take from us even what we have, and make all our cunning plans come to nothing, and prove us fools, just when we fancy ourselves most clever. There is no use being ambitious and pushing, and trying to scramble up on our neighbours' shoulders. For we were not sent into this world to do what we like, but what God likes; not to work for ourselves, but to work for God; and God knows exactly how much good each of us can do, and what is the best place for us to do it in, and how to teach and enable us to do it; and if we choose to be taught, He will teach us; and if we choose to go His way, and do His work, He will help us to it. But if we will not have His way, He will not let us have our own way—not at first, at least. He will bring our plans to nothing, and let us make fools of ourselves, and bring in sudden accidents of which we never dreamed, just to show us that we are not our own masters, and cannot cut out our own roads through life. And if we take His lesson, and go to Him to teach and strengthen us—well: and if not—then perhaps—which is the most awful misery which can happen to any man on earth—God may give up teaching us during this life, and let us have our own way, and be filled with the fruit of our own devices; from which worst of punishments may He in His mercy, save you, and me, and all belonging to us, in this life and in the life to come.

But some of you may say: "We understand the first half of the text very well, and like it very well; we all think it just that those who set themselves up should have a fall, and we are very glad to see them have a fall: but we do not see why he who abases himself should have any right to be exalted." Ah, my friends, it is much easier, and needs much less knowledge of God, and much less of the likeness

of Christ, to see what is wrong, than to see what is right. Every man knows when a bone is broken, but it is not every one who can set it again. Nevertheless, there is a sort of left-handed reason in that argument. For a man has no more right to make himself out worse than he is, than he has to make himself out better than he is. A man should confess to being just what he is, neither more nor less. Nevertheless, he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Of course I do not mean those who, like some I know, make a fawning humble way of talking a cloak for their own self-conceit; who call themselves miserable sinners all the time that they are fancying that they are almost the only people in the world who are sure of being saved, whatever they do; who, as some do, actually pride themselves on their own convictions of sin, and glory in their own shame, and despise those who will not slander themselves as they do.

They are equally hateful to God and to God's enemies. If you and I are disgusted at such hypocritical self-conceit, be sure the Lord Jesus is far more pained at it than we are; for as a wise man says: "The devil's darling sin is the pride that apes humility."

But let a man really be convinced of sin; let a man really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ's atonement; let a man really believe in the Holy Spirit; and that man will have little need to ask why he should humble himself more than he deserves, and little wish to boast of himself, and push himself forward, and get praise, or riches, or power in the world. For that man would say to himself: "I, sinner as I am; I, who know that I do so many wrong things daily; things so wrong that it required the blood of the Son of God to wash out the guilt of

them—who am I to set myself up? I cannot be faithful in a little—why should I try to be ruler over much? I cannot use properly the blessings and the power which God does give me—must I not take for granted that, if I had more riches, more power, I should use them still worse? I know well enough of a thousand sins, and weaknesses and ignorances in myself which my neighbours never see. I believe, therefore, my neighbours have much too good an opinion of me, and not too bad a one; and therefore I am not going to boast or puff myself to them. I can only thank God they do not see the inside of this foolish heart of mine as well as He does! In short, I am not going to set myself up, and try to get a higher place among men than I have already, because I am certain that I have already a ten times better one than I deserve."

Or again, if a man really believed in the Holy Ghost, which is much the same as really believing in the kingdom of God; if he really believed that God was the King and Master of his heart and soul; if he really believed that everything good, and right, and wise in him came from God's Holy Spirit, and that everything wrong and foolish in him came from himself and the devil; then he would surely say to himself: "Who am I to try to set myself up above my neighbours, and get power over them; what have I that I did not receive? Whatever money, or station, or cleverness, or power of mind I have, God has given me, and without Him I should be nothing. Therefore, He only gave me these talents to use for Him, and if I use them for my own ends, I shall be misusing them, and trying to rob God of His own. I am His child, His subject, His steward; He has put me just in that place in His earth which is most fit for me, and

my business is, not to try to desert my post, and to wander out of the place where He has put me, but to see that I do the duty which lies nearest me, so that I shall be able to give an account to Him. It is only if I am faithful in a few things, that I can expect God to make me ruler over many things." Ah, my friends, if we could but see ourselves, not as we fancy we are, nor as others fancy we are, but just as we really are, then, instead of pushing, and boasting, and standing stiffly by our rights, and fancying that God and man are unjust to us, we should be crying out all day long with the prodigal son: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." We should say with St. Paul—who, after all, remember, was the wisest, and most learned, and noblest-hearted of all the Apostles—that we are at best the chief of sinners. We should feel like the dear and blessed Magdalene of old, the pattern for ever of all true penitents, that it was quite honour enough to be allowed to wash Christ's feet with our tears, while every one round us sneered at us and looked down upon us—as, after all, we deserve. And so, believe me, we should be exalted. It would pay us, if payment is what we want. For so we should be in a more right, more true, more healthy, more wise, more powerful state of mind; more like Jesus Christ, and therefore more likely to be sent to do Christ's work, and share Christ's reward. For this is the great law of the kingdom of God in which we live, that man is nothing, and God is everything; and that we are strong and wise, and something, only when we find out that we are weak and foolish, and nothing, and go to our Father in heaven for strength, and wisdom, and spiritual eternal life. And then we find out how true it is that he who humbles himself, as he deserves,

will be raised up; how he who loses his life will save it; how blessed are the poor in spirit, those who feel that they have nothing but what God chooses to give them; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven! How blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; who feel that they are not doing right, and yet cannot rest till they do right; for they shall be filled! How blessed are the meek, who do not set up themselves, or try to fight their own battles, and compete with their neighbours in the great scramble and struggle of this world; for they—just the last persons whom the world would expect to do it—shall inherit the earth! Choose, my friends, choose! The world says: "Push upwards, praise yourself, help yourself, put your best side outwards." The great God who made heaven and earth says: "Know that you are weak, and foolish, and sinful in yourself. Know that whatever wisdom you have, I the Lord lent you; and I the Lord expect the interest of my loan. Know that you are my child in my Kingdom. Stay where I have put you, and when I want you for something better, I will call you; and if you try to rise without my calling you, I will only drive you back again. So the only way to be ruler over much, is first to be faithful in a little. My friends, which of the two do you think is likely to know best, man or God?

THE END.

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